

SHORT STORIES

EDITED BY
G. ARTHUR PEARSON

(OF PEARSON'S WEEKLY)

NO. 520.

FOR WEEK ENDING DECEMBER 17TH, 1898.

[ONE PENNY.]

THE NURSE.

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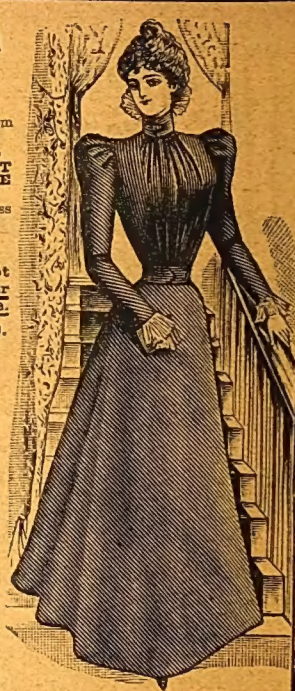
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SHORT STORIES

No. 520.

ONE PENNY.

For the Week ending December 17th, 1898.

A COMPLICATED BURGLARY.

UNLIKE a good many marriages of convenience, the union between Miss Madge Danvers and George Fenton third Baron Lovell, had proved quite a respectable success. The fair Madge had even owned to a decided weakness for the handsome lad of twenty-three, and though he was not very rich as barons go, there was no denying the solid social advantages of the coronet, or the sweet sound of the pleasant prefix that went with it.

Lord Lovell had £5,000 a year and tastes up to £10,000, and her ladyship had £500 a year under her mother's will, and social ambitions that would have sat easily on the wife of a millionaire.

His lordship's ground rent and royalties were not quite unencumbered when he married, and as he and his wife found all too little difficulty in getting through their joint income and into debt on the other side of it, each year of wedded life saw the family acres dipped a little deeper than the preceding one.

Wherefore it came to pass in the fourth year of their union, what time Junius the favourite ran a bad fourth for the Cesarewitch, that his lordship found himself £500 short of the sum necessary to see him satisfactorily through settling-day. Most unfortunately, too, it happened that her ladyship, just at that very time, wanted a couple of hundred pounds very badly to stave off serious inconveniences arising out of sundry unpaid accounts for the barest necessities of fashionable life.

This unpleasant combination of circumstances, further

Edited

By

G. Arthur Pearson

complicated by a total lack of conjugal confidence, led to the flying of two separate "kites," the strings of which, curiously enough, were both held by the same hand.

It was Thursday afternoon, and Lord Lovell had not got together a single hundred of the £500 that alone could save him from dishonour on the fatal Monday.

He had returned to his club tired and disgusted after a fruitless pilgrimage to the City, and there he chanced upon a friend who showed him a way out of his troubles.

Francis Jameson was a captain of Lancers, retired on half-pay, and the Egyptian medal in consequence of a spear-thrust that had ended his riding days for good. Just after his retirement he had come into a few thousands on the decease of an ancient and admiring maiden aunt, and since then he had lived at the rate of about £2,000 a year without contracting a single debt. What Eldorado he had invested his money in no one knew, and as long as he kept up appearances no one cared.

The ex-captain of Lancers was of course very sorry to hear of his lordship's difficulties, and would have been only too happy to have helped him out of them, if only for the sake of obliging his wife's husband; for Lady Lovell, while she was yet Madge Danvers, had refused him so sweetly and tenderly that he felt sure that he was rejected on purely social and pecuniary grounds.

Unfortunately, however, his money was all locked up; but at the same time he did happen to know of an obliging solicitor on the other side of the water who often had a thousand or two to dispose of on behalf of his clients.

The upshot of this conversation was that shortly before noon on the following day his lordship crossed the water, presented Jameson's card to Mr. Thomas Gaston, solicitor, 29A, High Street, Newington, and after a few minutes' discussion of his case, was informed, somewhat to his surprise, that the money would be at his disposal by twelve o'clock the following day on his personal security. The interest would only be 5 per cent. a month, which was very reasonable, considering all the circumstances.

About two hours after his lordship had left the dingy South-side street, and departed, wondering yet rejoicing, to more congenial latitudes, a lady, attended by a smart French maid, descended from a hansom at Mr. Gaston's hospitable door.

A quarter of an hour later the lady and her maid re-entered their cab. In the lady's little handbag there reposed four £50 notes, and in the drawer of Mr. Gaston's safe lay a slip of blue stamped paper endorsed "Margaret Fenton."

* * * * *

Three months had passed since Lord and Lady Lovell had paid their separate visits to Newington, and the two bills in Mr. Gaston's hands would fall due in three days' time. Disaster after disaster had befallen his lordship since he had borrowed that £500, until now the nominal master of £5,000 a year did not know where to lay his hands upon a paltry hundred for current expenses, to say nothing about meeting the impending bill.

The three months had been a period of increasing difficulty to both Lord and Lady Lovell. They had each applied to Mr. Gaston for a renewal of their respective bills, and each had been politely but firmly informed that unless adequate security were forthcoming, the bills would have to be met in due course.

Now the only security that they possessed between them were the family jewels, worth between three and four thousand pounds, but as neither cared to tell the

other how matters stood it was rather difficult to see how they could be made available.

Two days before the bills had to be met his lordship, in a fit of deperation, laid all his troubles bare before his friend Jameson, and incidentally lamented the fact that the family jewels had been settled on Lady Lovell on her marriage, subject to the condition that she should not dispose of them without the consent of two trustees, to whom under the present circumstances an appeal was not to be thought of.

"Then, my dear fellow," said Jameson, after considering the subject for a few moments in silence, "the only course open to you as far as I can see is to do as others have had to do before you, and have the jewels stolen for you by a trustworthy burglar, realise them on the quiet, and retire to the Continent until your troubles have blown over. The game is up for the present as far as I can see, and you must just lie by quietly until your estates have cleared themselves."

This curious method of extrication had not occurred to his lordship; but the moment it was suggested to him the very strangeness of the idea fascinated him, and he made no more objection than to question the feasibility of the plan.

Jameson very soon allayed his feelings on this score by telling him the inner history of a once celebrated jewel robbery, in which neither jewels nor thieves were ever traced, and when Lord Lovell parted an hour later from his friend in need, the details of the sham burglary were all arranged, and the event was fixed to come off the following night, when the Lovells and the gallant Captain would be at a ball until the small hours of the morning. Jameson was to provide the burglar, and all that his lordship would have to do was to hand over his latch-key, himself and his wife keep out of the way until three o'clock in the morning, and meet him the next day to receive the plunder.

Now by one of those strange coincidences which happen rather more frequently in real life than they do in fiction, at the very time that this little plot was being arranged in the smoking room of Lord Lovell's club, an almost identical conspiracy was being hatched in his wife's boudoir between her ladyship and her clever, if somewhat unscrupulous, French maid.

Long before her husband had thought of them, Lady Lovell had looked with longing eyes on her splendid jewels, and most fervently wished that no trustees existed to question her disposal of them according to her own needs and desires.

Two or three times she had bewailed to her *confidante* her inability to dispose of enough of them to help her out of her present scrape without exposure and social disgrace, and now the faithful Josephine rose to the occasion, and, for a consideration, boldly volunteered to steal the jewels on behalf of her almost distracted mistress.

It did not take the clever Frenchwoman many minutes to convince the haughty, ignorant girl of the ease with which the plan could be carried into execution, and so before his lordship returned to dinner she had consented that Josephine should find her jewel-case unlocked, and abstract the precious contents while she was away at Lady Fitz-Alan's ball the following night.

Little conspiracies of this kind would generally go off satisfactorily if the parties to them would only keep faith with each other, but they do not always do so, and in the present case it must be regretfully recorded that twelve hours had not elapsed before Lord Lovell had formed a counterplot on his own account by which he

hoped to obviate the necessity of trusting to the *bond fides* of Captain Jameson's burglar, and to get the jewels for himself without letting them go outside the house.

Joseph Crooks, *alias* "Crooky Joe," whose services had been retained for the removal of the jewels in accordance with Captain Jameson's plan, found no difficulty in the execution of the first and most important part of his delicate enterprise. Watching his opportunity, he let himself in with the latch-key, stole upstairs to her ladyship's boudoir, and was pleased to find that someone's carelessness had saved him the trouble of picking the lock of the jewel-case. In a very few minutes he had slipped the morocco cases into his capacious pockets and was on his way downstairs again, chuckling to himself over the easiest job he had ever had in all his professional experience.

Everything having gone so well thus far, it would be easier to imagine than describe his disgust at finding himself confronted on the first-floor landing by a gentleman in evening dress, holding a cocked revolver, the barrel of which was in a disagreeably straight line with his own person. He halted, and his hand instinctively sought the back pocket of his short tail coat.

"If you take that hand out of your pocket I shall shoot," said the gentleman, in a voice whose low, steady tones told Joseph that the game was practically up so far as his present undertaking was concerned. Under the circumstances he wisely concluded to parley with a view to conditional surrender, so he said as gently as he knew how:—

"Chuck it, gov'nor! I ain't got no pistil, and I'll give up all I've took if yer'll lemme 'ook it quietly."

"I've no doubt you would, and a very good get-out for you too; but that is a matter which wants a little discussion. Turn round and go into that room, the last door on the corridor. Go quietly or you may wake someone."

The speaker was in a position to give orders, and Joseph stood on such delicate ground that there was no course open for him but obedience. He went to the door indicated, opened it, and walked into a snug little sanctum in which a jet of gas was burning.

"Sit down and make yourself comfortable," said his host, pointing to an armchair with the barrel of his revolver. "I want to have a chat with you, and we shall not be disturbed for half-an-hour if we don't talk too loud. Is this little affair your own idea?"

"No, sir, it ain't. I was put up to it by a party I knows, who said as 'ow 'e 'ad got instructions from a gentleman wot said 'e wanted the job done fur a swell friend of 'is as was compelled to reerlise on 'is joolery on the quiet, like. I wos to sneak the stuff and give it to the chap wot come to me, and 'e wos to give me a tenner fur the job. That's all I knows about it, straight."

"A very fair story, but rather too mixed to be true. If the man wanted his jewellery stolen, why ever shouldn't he take it himself instead of giving you the chance to run off with the lot?"

"I allow it don't look true, mister, but it's as right as gospel for all that, s'elp me!"

"Well, we won't argue the point, we might be interrupted, and if I'm going to let you go it's time you were off"—Joseph assented with some feeling, and his host went on—"Now, what I propose is this. I don't want to get you into trouble, and a prosecution would be a lot of worry to both of us, especially to you. Therefore we'll take your story as true, you will put what you have taken on that table, and I will give you a couple of

sovereigns if you will go and tell the people who sent you that the jewels were stolen, or, at any rate, had disappeared, when you got here. Will that suit you?"

"Down to the ground, mister. I don't know wot yer game is, but that's no bizness of mine. You've be'aved honourable to me, and 'ere's the stuff—every bit as I took."

As he spoke, Joseph pulled out a dozen morocco cases of different sizes from his pockets and laid them, with a creditably small show of reluctance, on the table. When he had put the last one down his host handed him two sovereigns, took up one of the cases and opened it.

Instead of the diamond necklace it ought to have held, it contained a cheap, flashy string of crystals not worth five shillings.

With an unprintable exclamation, Lord Lovell threw it on the table and rapidly opened the other cases. Not one of them held the jewels he looked for.

The faces of the nobleman and the burglar as they looked at each other and the sham jewellery by turns, bore a curious likeness in spite of the natural difference of their features. They had both been very badly sold, and they looked it.

The feelings of his lordship as he showed Joseph out of the side door of the house were decidedly mixed and by no means cheerful, still, for the next few hours, there was nothing to be done, so he went upstairs, put the cases with their worthless contents back into the jewel box, and returned a sad and sorely puzzled man to escort his wife home from Lady Fitz-Allan's ball.

When her ladyship reached home and sent for her maid, Josephine entered the room with a curious, wicked-looking glint in her eyes, and in rapid, broken accents told her the story of the vanished jewels and the failure of their scheme. The next day Lady Lovell was confined to her room, and it was not until the evening that her husband was able to condole with her on the subject of their joint loss.

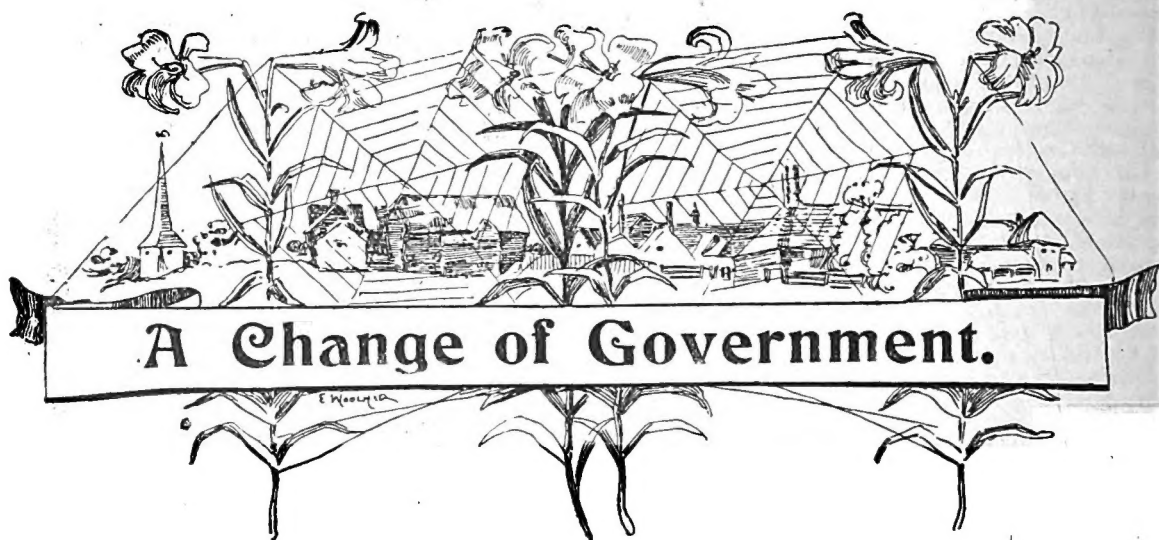
They never saw them again, and their disappearance opened the flood-gates of ruin so wide that there was nothing for it but a speedy retirement to the Continent or the endurance of social ostracism at home.

They agreed in choosing the former, so his lordship gave his good friend Jameson a power of attorney to deal with his estates for the benefit of his creditors, reserving only £500 a year for himself, and departed to the South of France.

Mr. Thomas Gaston, of Newington, was made manager of the estates, which he ruthlessly squeezed very much to the advantage of himself and of his employer, the ex-captain of Lancers, private money-lender, and organiser of complicated burglaries.

But even Mr. Gaston did not know how Lady Lovell's jewels got from her boudoir to the lower drawer of the safe that still held her ladyship's dishonoured acceptance, until one day last winter, nearly seven years after the jewels vanished so mysteriously, Mdlle. Josephine, desiring to retire from business into respectable married life in her own land, turned up at the office in High Street, Newington, and demanded £1,000 down as the price of her silence as to how Captain Jameson employed her to substitute the false for the real gems half an hour before Mr. Joseph Crooks made the greatest blunder of his whole professional career.

The fact that the money was paid within three hours gives a strong colouring of probability to Mdlle. Josephine's explanation of the mystery.



A Change of Government.

"Ah, you're just in time for the revolution!"

This was the whisper greeting Don Munios gave me half an hour after my arrival in La Guayro.

"Revolution," said I, "what revolution?"

"Why yours, of course," he answered with a chuckle.

"My revolution! Look here, Munios, out with your joke."

"But it's no joke. We've got the man, we've got the guns, and the trap is all but ready to be sprung. A week from St. Sebastian's and the business will be on. It won't take long. We bag the Prince, that rascal Castille, his councillor, and General Sargos at one clip. At the next, we get the Prince's brother and one or two of the smaller fry in the army. Then, *vive la république!*"

"And what is to happen to these people you mention?"

"Oh, just removed—grrrrp, you know," and Don Munios drew his hand across his throat with a suggestive leer. Yet I have seen his eyes fill with tears at the sight of a pin scratch on a child's arm.

In an instant my business instinct was up in arms. "Look here!" I said hotly, "you don't suppose that I take any part in your g-r-r business, do you? Why, that sort of thing would simply kill my enterprise. As a friend, I advise you to drop your revolution at once."

"What!" Don Munios threw his cigarette out of the window and jumped to his feet. "Let Guayro suffer longer under this good-for-nothing Prince? Why, see what he's done for the country during the last five years! Look at the banana plantations—abandoned! Look at the gold mines—idle! Look at the railway—two streaks of rust and a mortgage! The treasury is bankrupt, the government corrupt, and things are gone to the dogs generally, all that our feather-head of a Prince may amuse himself with his boon companions and make a study of new sensations."

Calm or ruffled, these people of Spanish blood are always picturesque. Their fires of passion are ever lightly banked. Just open a damper and the flames leap from coals which a moment before seemed black and dead. And Don Munios was a true Spaniard.

"Your Prince may be all you say," I returned, "and

your affairs may have gone to the dogs, but mine are all right, and a revolution would play ducks and drakes with them. Why not use peaceable means—agree to get along without a Prince, and send him back to Spain marked 'unavailable?'"

"Impossible! I'd be as much opposed to bloodshed as you are, but I know the situation. The officers are the Prince's boon companions. As for the soldiers, they idolise their officers—and there you are! No, the people have made up their minds that for the good of La Guayro, the Prince and his soldier friends must die. In confidence I tell you that in ten days the blow will fall. If in that time you can propose any plan for setting up a republic peacefully, I promise to put it fairly before the Revolutionary Council."

This was the situation over which we argued until the stars faded; and it still "hung heavy over my head" when I awoke to find the tropic sun beating straight down upon the adobe walls of my host's home.

I had come to La Guayro as representative of a commercial company, with a concession from the government of La Guayro, given in return for a sum that assured royal reception in the bankrupt kingdom. It was doing well in its mines, and I didn't want my business prospects upset.

To make the company's position doubly secure, I had, in a sort of inspection tour some months previously, engaged Don Munios as local agent with a salary that had secured his protestations of everlasting loyalty. Indeed, even now he tried to make himself believe that the prospective revolution was for the company's good, but to me civil strife meant nothing less than indefinite delay in digging, if indeed the mere rumour of it did not knock the bottom out of our stocks in the London market. At any rate, gunpowder costs money, and whoever won would make us pay their bills in the shape of taxes.

Viewed from any standpoint, the situation accumulated seriousness at such a rate, that before I had been up an hour I had called in cypher to the London office that a revolution was imminent, and that unless it could be prevented our interests would be imperilled. With as much urgency as I could put into a cable message, I begged that the manager of the company, who was to be

somewhere in America about that time, should be instructed to come to my help at once.

For two days I fairly lived at the cable office, waiting feverishly for an answer; but the oracle remained dumb. I was afraid that he could not possibly arrive in time, yet I waited anxiously for some reply.

On the third morning I walked down to the steamship office—to lay my plans in case it seemed necessary to get away before the row began. To my surprise I saw a big white yacht ploughing her way up the bay. She did not deign to poke her aristocratic nose up to the tumble-down quay, but came to a stop off-shore, not even dropping her anchor. I caught sight of a curiously familiar figure, followed by a man carrying a case, saunter out of the cabin, shake hands with half-a-dozen men aboard, wave an airy good-bye, and step into the boat, turning to me a face that—yes, there was no mistaking him—it was the face of Mr. Walter Rayner, the manager of our company, and the one man in the world who, if the means existed for accomplishing a bloodless revolution in La Guayro, would find these means.

When he stepped off the quay I could only babble my delight that he had arrived so soon after receiving my message.

"Message?" repeated Rayner, as I helped his man tumble their belongings into the broken-down vehicle that did duty for a public conveyance. "I got no message. Been cruising for days with Hill and his friends. He came out of his way on purpose to drop me off here, and now he's gone back after other sport. But what about your message? Nothing wrong I hope? For I'm having a rest. Doctor's orders. Told me to hunt up the dullest, sleepest place I could and go there. Well, what are you smiling about?"

As well as I could, owing to the way in which we were being jolted over vilely-paved streets, and also considering the proximity of Rayner's man on the front seat, I explained the La Guayro tangle, winding up with the point blank question whether he could straighten it out. To which Rayner responded only with the counter question, when could he see Don Munios? When informed that we were to be guests at that worthy's residence, he relapsed into silence.

Rayner did not keep the workings of his mind in a glass case.

The surprise of Don Munios on seeing my companion had a touch of fear in it. The Latin American is only a generation removed from the believer in the black arts.

When I had told him that I had cabled for Rayner to come to stop the row, he had smiled; it wasn't possible. Yet here he was, several days before time—and in advance of the revolution.

"Your steamships must have the wings of the wind," was all he said, however.

And neither Rayner nor I denied it.

After dinner, seated under the palm trees in the courtyard, Don Munios gave a report of the preparations for the revolution, which he vainly attempted not to make enthusiastic; ending his account, as I had mine, by asking if Rayner had any peaceable plan to suggest.

"Give me time," said my friend slowly. "You don't suppose I have conspiracies on tap, do you? Besides, there are one or two things I want to know."

Then ensued something like a game of twenty questions, in which Rayner in an hour acquired more information concerning La Guayro, its finances, agriculture, banking system, etiquette, leading men, and the character, foibles, and habits of its ruler than I had obtained during the two months of my previous stay.

"So the Prince amuses himself, he seeks new sensations at the expense of his people," he said slowly at last. "And the people—they are ready for a republic?"

"As the rosebud is ready to burst into blossom," said the Spaniard fervently.

"Um. With the Prince out of the way, would you have any trouble in establishing it?"

"Not a bit," said the Spaniard. "And you say there's no successor?"

Don Munios repeated that there was no heir apparent, that the Prince was a bachelor, and his only brother mentally unsound. "Besides," he added, "it's generally understood that the principality is to end with him, and a popular form of government is to be adopted."

"That simplifies the matter. Now let me have a chance to think things over."

Rayner's way of thinking things over was characteristic. It seemed to consist in literally seeing the town from its markets and quays, to the cathedral and palaces, and in casually chatting with representatives of every class, from the mule drivers to the chief conspirators, and the Prince himself. It even allowed him to spend an hour or so each evening in Munios' library, never reading, but apparently revelling in the atmosphere of books.

On the evening of the third day Rayner and I sat and smoked silently in this library. Apparently he was idly gazing at the ceiling. Then he walked about the room, glancing at the rows of books that lined the walls. He looked with the critical eye of a book fancier at the backs of one or two, and finally sat down with a volume on his knee.

"I've got it," he said quietly after a time, closing the volume and blowing a ring of smoke towards the ceiling.

"Got it? I knew you would. What is it?"

"That's it—up there," pointing to the thinning of a smoke ring.

"But where did you get it?"

"Out of that book. That's where the best of us go for an idea. Men have been thinking for ages, and writing what they thought for centuries. Don't try to do all your thinking yourself. Use other men's brains when you can. It pays."

"Which book? Let me see." But he had put the volume back, and would only indicate his source of inspiration by an indefinite wave of the hand. He said nothing more until Don Munios returned late that night from a meeting of the conspirators.

"The Prince suspects nothing at all?" asked Rayner of the arch conspirator.

"I shouldn't be at liberty if he did."





"Good! Now, I have a little plan. If it works, you can organise your republic without decimating the population. If it doesn't, you will be free to use your rifles and banana knives. Can I depend on you, Don Munios?"

"To the last."

"All right. Now I want you to tell me about this banquet we're all invited to at the Palace—let's see, three days from now."

The banquet was the usual monthly affair to which not only Don Munios, but Rayner and I, as large taxpayers worthy of conciliation, had already been invited.

Don Munios repeated this information, with appropriate phrases concerning wines and sweets wrung from the starving people.

"Yes, I know," said Rayner, "but I want details. Where is it to be held?"

"In the big banquet hall of the Palace."

"Oh, yes! It was being redecorated when I went over it, so I didn't see it. Quite a fine place, isn't it? Is it lighted by electricity?"

"Yes"—more phrases concerning the Prince's criminal extravagance.

"One thing more. Who is the Prince's royal sky-pilot, chief priest, or that sort of thing?"

The Spaniard's eyes expressed mental dizziness at this irreverence.

"The Archbishop of La Guayro. But why—"

"All right, I'd like to meet him to-morrow. Can you arrange it?"

"Certainly; only—"

"One thing more. You say the Prince likes to be amused. Do you suppose that you could arrange to have him ask my man Drake to be present as entertainer? Oh, Drake's no clothesbrusher," to a look in the Spaniard's eyes. "He's a gentleman, Drake is, a college graduate, and all that; but something went wrong with him in early life—crossed in love, perhaps, and he's never got on in life. Among other things he has been a magician on the variety stage. My friends and I found him very entertaining on the yacht, I assure you, and he'll give the Prince a new sensation or two. Now, why not introduce him as the distinguished French prestidigitateur, Monsieur Brion? Will that go?"

"Certainly," said Don Munios, catching some of his infectious enthusiasm. "The Prince will insist on summoning him if he numbers the black art among his accomplishments. Our sovereign dotes on that sort of thing. Only I don't understand."

"Oh, I thought we might give him one night's fun before he leaves the Prince business," said Rayner yawning. "Suppose we get some sleep, gentlemen? I'm tired."

And neither that night nor in the three days following would Rayner utter a word to either of us concerning his plans. In fact he seemed to have forgotten it himself.

Drake, meantime, had received his invitation, and was making such preparations as were possible without apparatus.

When Don Munios, becoming uneasy as the next day of grace approached, remonstrated and reminded him that the Revolutionary Committee was going on ahead with its preparations, Rayner nodded his acquiescence. "All right," he said; "load your guns, sharpen your swords and organise your government. I suppose you'll have a dictator for a while. All I want is the assurance that your first cabinet will sign an iron-bound contract to respect our concession, and let us dig twelve months in the year."

"I'll answer for that," said Don Munios. "But when are you going to get the Prince out of the way?"

"Wait till after the banquet," was the enigmatic reply.

It was a superb affair, even for the Prince of La Guayro—that banquet—for the fact that it marked the thirty-third birthday of the sovereign gave an excuse for extra preparation. As large taxpayers and persons to be conciliated, Rayner and I were given seats of honour, Rayner on the Prince's right hand, and I next to my friend. On either side of the long tables gleaming with the royal palace plate and glass and flowers, extended a line of dark, heavily-moustached men, many handsome, most of them young, and looking very brave and gay in their broadcloth, brass buttons, and gold lace. The viands were of distinguished excellence, and the wine of a flavour that belongs only to the output of certain world-renowned vineyards. At the same time there was no vulgar excess. It was not for nothing that the Prince had made the pursuit of pleasure the chief business of his life.

By the time the last course was reached, all things had worked together to bring the company into just the humour for greeting with enthusiasm the gentleman introduced as "M. Brion, the far-famed magician, and friend of Mr. Rayner, of the English company."

And M. Brion, otherwise Drake, proved himself worthy of Rayner's praise. Without any outfit but playing cards, rings, coins, handkerchiefs, and other small objects borrowed on the spot, he kept the entire assembly mystified and entranced. The Prince he captured at the start, by making a strawberry grow out of that gentleman's salt-cellar. Don Munios for the moment forgot the revolution in wonder of beholding a mango seed, hidden in his table napkin, sprout, and finally shoot up into a perfect plant.

Finally, after a number of tricks involving the disappearance of coins, interchange of rings, and the like, Drake took up a pack of playing cards, and proceeded to such card throwing as I have never seen.

Standing at the foot of the long table, he dealt a card to each of the thirty guests without moving from his position, landing the pasteboard deftly in the finger glass before each man. Then he threw one which sailed gracefully to a point just above the Prince's head, and then returned to the hand of the magician.

The native boomerang thrower of Australia would have been moved to envy to see the Queen of Hearts float back with such precision to the hand that sent her. Besides, he read cards through the back, made a rainbow of them about his head, and performed half-a-dozen

clever tricks that took by storm the La Guayreans. Suddenly, as if by way of climax, he turned, gave a long, shrill whistle, and, with a graceful gesture, sent the entire pack fluttering like a flock of birds straight at the walls of the banquet hall. Before the first one fell to the floor the lights went out with a snap, and the company was left in total darkness.

For a moment there was absolute silence, then the faint click of metal betrayed the fact that there was a furtive reaching for swords. The Spaniard trusts no man in the dark.

The next minute, however, all were reassured, and ardent Spanish interjections broke from the lips of the Prince and his delighted guests. Where had been the solid wall of the Palace now appeared a fairy-like landscape. Trees, mountains, a lake, a river and waterfall gleamed out of the darkness as by enchantment, then faded as quickly as they had appeared. But with only an instant's interval the scene appeared again, this time faintly, as a landscape seen in the gray early morning. Then one of the upper clouds was streaked with pink; then another. The light grew stronger, the whole sky and scene were gradually lighted up, until we saw it once more as if in the glare of the noonday sun.

Darkness again, illuminated this time by the crimson glow of a sunset. Then another interval of blackness and the electric globes in the crystal chandelier above us blazed out again, and instead of gazing at the magic landscape, our eyes detected what had seemed a section of the solid wall of the Palace was a sort of drop curtain painted to match the other decorations. These waterfalls, dawns, and noons, and sunsets had not been the product of black art, but merely the work of a clever scene painter and skilful electrician.

As the storm of applause following M. Brion's withdrawal died away, the Prince rose, glass held high.

"A health to M. Brion and Mr. Rayner," he cried, his handsome face flushed.

With a bell-like tinkling of glasses the toast was drunk, and we had pushed back our chairs and begun to move about and break up into groups, when the voice of Castillio, the chief councillor of the Prince, drew all our eyes to our end of the table.

"The Prince! Look!"

Without a sound His Highness had sunk in his chair, his arms limp, his head hanging on one side, his face, lately gay and glowing, now turned an ashy grey.

The next moment he fell into the arms of General Sarjos who sat at the Prince's left.

In an instant a contagion of excitement spread to the entire Palace. While attendants removed the Prince to his apartments, a messenger was despatched for the Royal Physician and the Archbishop, and the banqueters, now thoroughly sobered, withdrew to the reception-room to await developments.

"A slight heart seizure or a mild stroke of apoplexy," was the news with which we were finally dismissed. And it was added that the Royal Physician expected that the Prince would soon revive. But those acquainted with the ways of Palaces wagged their heads knowingly over the non-committal nature of the report.

By nine o'clock next morning the seriousness of the Prince's condition could no longer be concealed, but was proclaimed in bulletins to the excited crowd who had been waiting at the Palace gates since dawn. At noon the Prince was still unconscious, and the bulletins indicated grave doubts of his recovery. At 2 p.m. the

situation was the same. His respiration was faint and the heart's action almost imperceptible.

At three o'clock it was rumoured that the Archbishop had proposed that as a last expedient he should resort to an old custom still prevalent among the Spanish-speaking people. In accordance with this usage, when a man of prominence is supposed to be dying, has apparently but one chance in a hundred of living, and wants to make the most of it, he has his head shaved, is dressed in monk's robes, and takes a solemn vow, if his life is spared, to enter a monastery.

There's no renouncing his vows if he lives.

If he is unconscious—and herein lay the special application of the custom—his friends may take the necessary steps without his sanction.

In short, the priests asked that in order to save the Prince's life for this world, or his soul for the next, they should make a monk of him; and though Castillio and the army officers protested vigorously, many prominent citizens, some of whom Don Munios had been accustomed to meet with in secret, enthusiastically seconded the appeal of the priests. As for the ignorant and superstitious common people, who believed fervently in the potency of the old custom, they thronged about the cathedral and raised their voices in a fervour of entreaty.

At 4 p.m. it was officially announced that the Archbishop would wait until six, and that if by that time the Prince was still unconscious and alive, he would perform the ceremony.

When that hour had arrived and the Prince's condition was unchanged, word swept through the dense crowd that filled the plaza and, overflowing, pressed against the very gates of the palace, that the operation of transforming the Prince into a monk had begun.

But about seven o'clock the Prince showed signs of returning vitality. In another hour he opened his eyes, and by nine o'clock he was sitting up, rubbing his hands over his head in bewilderment, and weakly gasping a "health to M. Brion and Mr. Rayner."

Meantime Don Munios and his followers, realising the drift of affairs, had quietly gathered their forces, seized the Arsenal, and before Castillio and the Prince's military friends understood what was happening, occupied the royal council chamber—all without a struggle.

Just at midnight, as the Prince, by order of the Archbishop, was carried off to the monastery, uttering remonstrance grievously out of character with his new rôle, Don Munios and his friends proclaimed the establishment of the Republic of La Guayro. The thing had been done without the pop of a gun or the loss of a single life.

"Rayner," said I, as we sat in Munios's library late that night, "now that all is over, do you mind telling me your plan? Natural causes have—"

"Natural causes!" returned my friend scornfully. "I arranged it with Drake and the Palace electrician, a clever young Scotsman, and while the lights went out I dropped a potion into the Prince's cup."

"But the custom?"

"I discovered that night in the library—recorded in Volume iii, Chapter 4, of that set of Curiosities of Spanish History. In chumming with the Archbishop I found that it was still 'practical.' But I say," said Rayner with a twinkle of appreciation, "do you suppose that the Prince, in all his varied experience, ever had a sensation that matched his, when he found out his fate?"

PETER CONNOLLY.

What Love will Do.

MAX VANNER leant against an oaken door-way, and out of his dark, magnetic eyes, carelessly scanned the gliding throng until——

Yes, there she was! He could not mistake that exquisite form—that beautiful face.

As usual she was surrounded by her "Knights of the Carpet" court, poor moths. He was stronger than their strongest, yet he had been singled, and——

Carelessly he sauntered to her side.

She lifted her violet eyes; such strange, half sad, half tender, wholly proud, defiant eyes, that their fringing glance had long since pierced his heart.

But just now the eyes languidly lifted to his were tinged with boredom; the faintest curl of contempt just curved the beautiful, mobile lips, and she turned from her eager suitors with an insolent, unmistakable shrug of her exquisitely moulded shoulders.

"Is it true that you are going to that hot-bed of fever, South America, Dr. Vanner?" she asked in a low dragging voice which always entered his dreams, and haunted his waking hours. "It is the latest rumour," she added, with another eloquent gesture of contempt, "with which my brilliant knightly train has been seeking to amuse me."

"I hope they have succeeded," scornfully returned Max, a flash of wrath in his masterful eyes. How cold and cruel her flexible voice jarred upon his senses! "To amuse Miss Ardyn would be a more difficult feat, and praiseworthy, perhaps, than to exterminate Yellow Jack for ever."

A crimson stain mounted to the pure Grecian brow, swept down the lovely face, and died under the jewelled bodice of her white silk gown.

"You should have been a surgeon," she said coldly. "You would have had no nice scruples about inflicting torture."

"Torture?" he whispered hoarsely, his warm breath fanning her lovely cheeks.

They had drawn apart from the pushing crowd, or the pushing crowd had drawn apart from them; neither, in this intense moment, noted which or cared.

"Torture? How little you comprehend what it is!"

Visibly she shrank from the fire in his eyes, the passion in his voice. Her action brought him to his senses.

He laughed lightly.

"Well, you have had your pound of flesh," he said. "And had it from the heart. Are you satisfied?"

She flashed him a disdainful glance from her great luminous eyes. They expressed a strange commingling of emotions.

"Do you blame me?" she asked bitterly. "You boasted of your strength. You were so proud, so cynical, so self-sufficient, and I was a woman, a coquette, what you will!"

She paused, then resumed with a little reckless laugh.

"What a great pity I could not escape my own flail when it fell!"

She had spoken almost fiercely; yet she turned with a smile on her exquisite face when a tall, pompous, middle-aged man walked in between them, placing a hand upon the arm of each.

So, in actual life, he stood between them.

"Is this thing I hear true, Vanner?" he asked. "Are you really so rash as to fling away your life in that pestilential city of Rio?"

"More valuable lives by far are flung away every day in the case of humanity, Charring," returned Max quietly.

He could not help but notice how deathly white Maud Ardyn's lovely face had grown.

A great pity smote his heart, and bore away its bitterness.

He would not seek to see her again. After all, had she been to blame? If they had only met before she had sold herself to Mammon, personified in Paul Charring—if her training had been different from the worldly thing it was!

"Was going to ask you to be best man at my wedding," Charring's voice was saying, when Vanner again comprehended.

"If anything could tempt me to stay," retorted the physician, infinite scorn in his eyes, his firm lips smiling, "that would certainly be effective. But I wish you just as much joy of that occasion nevertheless. Now I must bid you both farewell. I leave London soon."

He shook hands with each, quite as if it were the most indifferent thing on earth; then sauntered down the long brilliant rooms, and disappeared from Maud Ardyn's burning eyes.

"Are you ill, my dear?" exclaimed her betrothed, as a low moan passed the lovely lips.

"By Jove! Water, Ware; she has fainted! This infernal heat has overcome her."

But, whether due to the heat or a deeper-seated cause, next day Maud Ardyn was down with brain fever.

Her wedding—that anticipated event of the season—was postponed, while, in her darkened room, the beautiful girl fought with a grim and grasping monster the battle of life and death.

People came and went with solicitous inquiries. Charring haunted the Ardyn mansion like some giant ghost out of its element.

The doctors gave up all hope, and sat down to await the issue: then suddenly the tide was turned, and they knew that Maud Ardyn would live.

During her convalescence, she was given a newspaper by her own request.

Her heart was hungering for news of the fevered Rio, where Max Vanner toiled above those writhing victims of a fell disease.

Suddenly her eyes fell upon the list of dead. They ran along the column; then with a wild cry she rose and staggered forward and fell in a shapeless heap, for Dr. Vanner's name was amongst them.

There was a long relapse, more dangerous—far more dangerous—than the first had been.

Although she had prayed to die, Maud recovered

from it, however—but recovered and came back to earth so sad, so shadowy, so hopeless, that it brought tears to one's eyes to gaze upon her.

She sent for Paul Charring and told him the truth, blaming herself as he, in his manhood, never could have blamed her.

He would have comforted her in her wild, hopeless anguish, if he could. But he could not, so, regretfully, he freed her from her galling chains, and sailed for Australia.

Then society knew the engagement was off. Miss Armyn had thrown over a prince of finance. Was the girl mad? Or what had come between them?

"I shall never marry now," mused the girl wearily. "Never. Oh, my love, my king! why did I let you go? Why did I let you go?"

Then calming herself after a violent burst of grief, she would press her frail, white hands against her burning brow, and—

"I must go away—away, or I shall go mad!" she would murmur. "The world—Oh, I could not bear it. If only—only I could hope it would be over for me, too, soon!"

* * * * *

The narrow cots are pitifully full of writhing, suffering victims to that awful scourge—the Yellow Jack.

The nurses and physicians attending them here and there are pitifully few. So many are scattered throughout the city, stricken at its core.

"I wish you would look after the new nurse in the fourth ward," said one of the noble physicians to his doctor who came to relieve him. "he does not seem familiar with hospital work. Indeed, I should say she had never been familiar with any kind of work; but she was so eager they gave her the lightest cases."

The other bowed and went his way—a grave, brave, thoughtful way, treading down the thorns which lay so much thicker than roses in his path.

He attended all urgent cases, then, utterly unconscious that the windlass of fate was unravelling his destiny, silently entered the fourth ward.

A slim form, clad in grey, was bent over one of the cots.

Tears were streaming down her cheeks, for, with his childish hands in hers, its occupant had just passed away.

She looked up as the physician came forward and stood on the opposite side of the cot.

Their eyes met and he recoiled. She fell upon her knees with a low whisper.

He lifted her quickly in his arms and bore her from the infected room. He bore her beyond it, and out into the damp and drizzling air.

No word was spoken between them until they stood in the cool, deep vestibule of a silent churchyard. Then:

"Great Heaven! What are you doing in this infernal place?" panted Vanner, for he, indeed, it was. "Where is Char-ing? Is he mad, to bring you here?"

"I—I came myself. He does not know. We have parted for ever," stammered the beautiful nurse spasmodically.

Her eyes were bathed in happy tears; her heart, despite the danger and misery, dancing with bliss.

There followed momentary silence, then:

"And you—you have come to me, Maud?"

This was not the time for dissembling. Gladly she placed her hands in his outstretched palms, explaining to him the cause of her presence there.

"My noble darling," he whispered, drawing her close to his breast, "it was an error in the report. I remember noticing it, and smiling grimly to think it was chronicled on your wedding-day. Heavens! And to think there is nothing between us now, sweetheart. But I must take you from here at once—at once. I could not bear to lose you, now that you have been mine a moment."

Their lips met in a long, passionate kiss, from which plague, nor pestilence, nor death itself could ever take the tenderness; and in the cool, dark house of God they were joined that day, to work side by side through the weals and woes of all life's fevers for ever.

As she refused to leave Rio without her husband, they remained in the field of affliction, nobly striving for humanity's sake, until the fiend of destruction shrunk out of sight at winter's venomous touch.

LALLY O'BRIEN.

FIFTY GOLDEN SOVEREIGNS GIVEN AWAY EVERY WEEK.

Every week the Editor of **SHORT STORIES** addresses fifty envelopes to fifty people in various parts of the country. Inside each envelope he places a sovereign, and locks them away in his private safe.

SIMPLY TAKE A and address it to the Editor
POST-CARD under the following conditions:

 Ask if a sovereign has been addressed to you, giving your full name and address clearly written in ink.

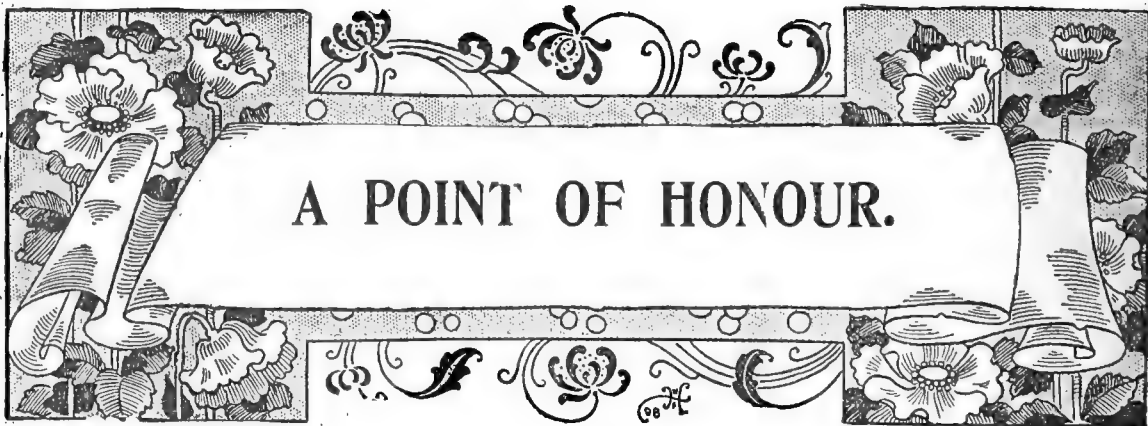
Fifty names and addresses have been picked out at random from directories, etc., etc.

No sovereign, however, will be awarded unless it is applied for, so it would be advisable for you to tell your friends to drop us a post-card, whether they are readers or not.

All applications for No. 11 distribution must reach us by December 19th, addressed to The 11th Sovereign Editor, "Short Stories" Office, Henrietta Street, London, W.C.

Each application must be made separately.

Result of the Eighth Distribution appears on page 789.



A POINT OF HONOUR.

"EVERYTHING'S settled," said Clavignac cheerfully, entering the café where Fougeret, surrounded by the usual group of journalists and professional men who frequented the place, awaited his return, "pistols, twenty paces, firing to go on till a result is reached."

"Good!" said Fougeret calmly, "and the rendez-vous?"

"Vezinet race-course, 10 a.m. Then on to Asnieres. Order me a carriage for eight o'clock, and be sure to have the same driver. He'll bring us luck."

"As you say."

"And do not forget the doctor. The pistols I'll attend to; I have a brand new set, and it's a fine chance to try them."

"I leave all to you."

And with a warm hand-clasp to Clavignac, Fougeret turned, nodded a hasty adieu to the rest of his friends, and left the room.

"A cool head, that Fougeret," admiringly remarked the sporting editor of a morning daily.

"Infernal cool!" came in a chorus from the group of men left behind, as if, in some way, their comrade's courage reflected credit upon them.

"He ought to be cool too," declared Clavignac, pouring himself out a full glass of absinthe. "Fougeret is not a chicken at this business; his fourth affair, if I count aright."

"So it is," responded the journalist respectfully.

"He shall head the line in my forthcoming series of the noted duellists of Paris."

Meanwhile Fougeret had passed into the street.

At the door of the café he had paused a moment as if to reflect; then, with a decided gesture, he started down the boulevard at a rapid gait.

Presently he halted before the window of a big book store filled with placards and gaily-bound volumes.

Prominently displayed in the front row were a dozen or so dainty little pamphlets neatly stamped on the back:

CONTES ROSES
ARMAND FOUGERET
THIRD EDITION.

He opened the door, entered, and passing between the long files of book-laden cases demanded of a clerk:

"M. Lavine—is he in?"

"In the office alone, sir."

Fougeret turned to the right and tapped at the door.

"Come in," responded a voice beyond.

Fougeret obeyed. The publisher, a man as young as himself nearly, with blonde beard and lively eyes, met him cheerfully.

"Come in, come in," said he, "glad to see you, too; 'Contes Roses' going splendidly. You saw them in the window. Third edition already. But what can I do for you to-day?"

"Can't you guess?" replied Fougeret, smiling in return.

"Money? The dickens!" cried the publisher, his brow clouding visibly; "always money. You have already drawn in advance, it seems to me."

"True, but I go out to-morrow, and it is necessary—"

"A duel!" broke in the other, "with Saint Landry, of course, for his article on 'Contes Roses.' You are right, my friend, entirely right. The critique was in bad taste and has affected our sales. Now, a duel as an offset will be an excellent advertisement, and, better still, will cost us nothing. Every paper in Paris will have the affair in full, and in giving the cause of the quarrel will speak of the book. A capital, admirable idea. Ten louis be enough?"

"Amplly sufficient."

"There they are, then," said the publisher, piling ten pieces of gold before the author, while the clerk drew up a receipt.

"A thousand thanks," Fougeret answered, as he gathered up the money.

"Not at all, not at all," said the other, carefully shutting the receipt in his desk. "Always ready to oblige you. I count on seeing you at the Varieties to-morrow night."

Fougeret took the hand extended to him and went out.

It was not five o'clock, and Fougeret took his way to the Madeline, briskly keeping step to a lively opera air that he whistled between his teeth, till he reached the throng of public vehicles that crowd the streets of that quarter.

Bearing in mind his friend's injunction touching the choice of a driver, he hunted up the wheeled mascot.

instructed him to call for Clavignac at eight sharp the next morning, and then turned his step towards the Saint Lazare station.

These preparatory details did not seem to disturb him at all; he knew them all. Every affair was the same, and as he walked along he ran over in his mind the duels that he had already been engaged in. The first was seven years back, at Savigny-sur-Orze, where he made his journalistic *début* on a local paper. A follower of the Noirville candidacy he found himself arrayed in fierce opposition to the Legitimist organ in a controversy that wound up in the field. He was wounded, but Noirville was elected by a large majority.

The second occurred from a Bourse transaction, where he figured as Noirville's secretary, a connection that involved him in a dispute with a jealous colleague, who sought a quarrel and found a sword thrust. The third was not very long after the second, and close on his heels came the ruin of his patron, Noirville whose speculations terminated in a sudden collapse. With the great banker's fall went all the secretary's prospects, and Fougere's little savings were almost swallowed up in the general whirlpool.

Despondent at first, Fougere rallied quickly and sturdily set to work to recover lost ground. He had others to think of besides himself—his brave little wife, whom he had married in days of prosperity, and who had clung to him closer than ever in the hour of misfortune. The thought of her and his two little children stimulated his efforts and strengthened him in the struggle for existence.

Through his connection with Noirville, Fougere knew a number of journalists, and through the kindness of one of them the doors of the *Review* were open to the young writer, whose contributions were received with marked approval by the literary world. His first novel achieved a brilliant success, and the comedy taken from it met an enthusiastic reception on its first performance at the Odeon.

From that time on his success was assured, and he, in consequence, began to acquire enemies. The present collection of some of his articles into a volume entitled "*Contes Roses*" had drawn from the pen of the cavilling St. Landry a critique so scathing, bitter, and unjust that Fougere, acting on his friends' advice, had sent his seconds to his jealous colleague.

And to-morrow he would be on the field as calm and careless as ever. What greater satisfaction could be given him, thought Fougere, as he halted before his modest house and turned the key in the door.

"At last, Armand," said a soft voice coming from the kitchen; "I am so glad. Wait in the dining-room; dinner is ready."

He entered the room. The table was set with four plates, and looked so tempting and inviting that the young man gave a contented sigh. Then the door of the kitchen opened, revealing a dainty little woman, a trifle pale, with very blue eyes and very blonde hair, bearing a smoking tureen, followed by a four-year old baby, who so evenly brought up the rear with the ladle.

"But how is this?" Armand inquired, seating himself and unrolling his napkin, after tenderly kissing his wife and children, "you are waiting on the table? Where is Rose?"

"Rose," replied the little woman, with a shade of embarrassment, "Rose is gone. I sent her away."

"Sent her away?" said Armand, surprised. "And why?"

"She was dishonest," responded Claudine. "I could

not keep her. I paid her a week in advance and dismissed her. You owe your dinner to Georget and me."

"Yes," said Georget gravely, "it was us. Don't you like the soup, papa?"

"Delicious!" declared Armand; "you are famous cooks. But—" dropping his voice a little, "where did you get the money, Claudine, to pay her?"

"I used what you gave me for the house this week. I knew that since your new book was nearly completed you could go to your publisher to-morrow morning and ask for an advance."

Armand trembled.

"So you see," continued his wife, "we can get along nicely. I would rather wait, of course, till the novel is finished, but I do not think that I am strong enough to go without eating until then. I have the will, but not the power, you know."

"And the money you shall have," broke in Armand hastily; "you will tire yourself out. I will have it—I will take it—two, or even three hundred francs if you desire."

"That will be better," Claudine assented, with a charming air of content, "because then I shall not have to part with my little piano. I did not intend you to know, but I found it a superfluous article of luxury, and they were coming to-morrow to take it away. Three hundred francs will get a nurse for the little one and many needed things besides."

"I see," said Armand, with a sad smile, "that the money will not last long."

"But in three weeks' time your book will be finished and we shall be rich again. Then I can have a new dress. This has been made over so many times, that there is scarcely enough left to hold the threads together."

"Yes," replied Armand, gazing consciously at the little threadbare gown, "I know—I know."

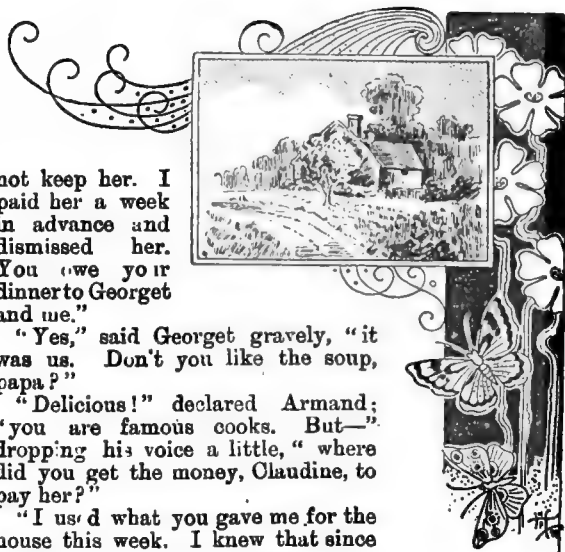
"And you need some new clothes, too, dear; and a new dress for Georget. Why, we will spend at least fifteen hundred francs."

"Fifteen hundred francs," repeated Armand thoughtfully.

"Fully fifteen hundred. A tremendous sum for us at present, dear, but your novel will bring us at least three thousand, and to think that twenty days will see it finished!"

"Twenty days," echoed Armand, speaking like an automaton.

"Ah, how happy we shall be!" Claudine went on, her eyes sparkling at the prospect of the pleasure she saw in advance. "We can pass the summer at the seaside; Georget can have a little red cap, and we'll all enjoy



ourselves as we did four years ago, when we were rich. How it all comes back to me, and with it all the other pleasures that I owe you. Kiss me, dearest!" and the loving little woman threw her arms about her husband's neck, who embraced her tenderly.

"But really," said Claudine, when she had disengaged herself from Armand's arms, "it is nine o'clock already. I must put baby to bed, lock up the house, and see you settled at work before I go. Come!"

And taking the lamp she preceded her husband into the little library that adjoined the bedroom.

"There," said she, raising her lips for a parting kiss, "now work fast, get through it and remember that our happiness depends upon these pages."

Left a one Armand seized the pen, but found it impossible to write a single word. Other thoughts which refused to be banished, occupied his mind. His head on his hand and staring vacantly into space, he remained in one position two long hours.

Presently a light tap sounded on the door.

"Armand," murmured the sweet voice, "I'm going to bed. Baby's asleep and everything's locked up safe and secure. Don't work too late—you should not weary yourself, dear."

The words recalled him to himself. He looked at the paper. It was blank.

"Come," muttered he, "this won't do. I must get to work!" and resolutely beginning he wrote on and on with feverish haste, filling five or six pages without raising his head. Suddenly he stopped. He had just written the words placed by himself in the mouth of one of his characters: "So be it! if a duel your are seeking a duel you shall have."

"A duel!" he cried, "why I am going to fight a duel myself!"

And a vision of the morrow passed swiftly before his eyes—the open clearing, the group of seconds, two men dressed in black facing each other, pistols pointing at the grass awaiting the signal, while the sunbeams shone through the trees and the birds sang joyously.

But the scene changed suddenly. It was a man he saw now, pale, and with closed eyes, lying on a litter, while one of the carriers stood knocking at a door—his door, as he recognised instantly. The woman who ran to meet the mournful cortège—the trembling creature who, with a terrible cry, threw herself upon the body—he recognised her, too. It was Claudine!

Armand rose hastily and rapidly paced the room. The thing was true. To-morrow he was to fight. To-morrow, pistol in hand he would be risking his own life to take another's.

His life! Great Heaven! did it belong to him? Had he the right to dispose of it? Did he not owe it as much as he owed money, to those that depended on him? Were he dead, what would become of the wife and the children thrown helplessly on the mercy of his terrible creditors? He had no means. There wasn't as much as a hundred franc note in the house. His sole dependence was his pen, his brain, and his talent. Where would they be to-morrow?

And his little wife, so frail and delicate, what was in store for her? The hospital. And after that? His children too? Georget, so bright, so happy, so intelligent; his little girl, his merry darling, what would become of her?

Fougeret continued to nervously pace up and down. The veins in his temples throbbed to bursting. He wetted a towel and bound it about his head. The cold water helped to cool his burning brain. Now he saw it all clearer. He had exaggerated the situation. A duel was not necessarily fatal. Had he not fought three already, and was not he still alive on the verge of the fourth?

Yes, but then he was alone in the world. His life was his own; he had a right to dispose of it as he pleased. He had no wife to leave behind, no children to leave fatherless, penniless and helpless. And as these thoughts began again to whirl through his brain, he fancied that he could see the shining barrel of the pistol with the little round dark hole aimed directly between his eyes.

He tried to shake off the presentiment, to think of other things. It refused to vanish. He was responsible for those he loved. They lived through him, and they would perish without him. The ball that struck him would take more than one life. There would be three victims, three to whom he owed love, happiness, and bread. Great Heaven! How terrible it all was!

But another thought, equally cruel, tortured his soul—his honour.

He knew his comrades and the scoffing strollers of the boulevards. He heard their comments and their pitiless mockery. What were they saying? "A coward?" No! Impossible! Some of his comrades would surely defend him. Men were good at heart. Some would be found that could understand.

"Armand," cried an anxious voice from an adjoining room, "is anything the matter, dear? You have been talking to yourself so loud, so strangely, for more than an hour. Are you ill, dear?"

"No, no, little one," returned Armand with a smile. Then, as the lids fell heavily over the sleepy eyes she added drowsily:

"Just think, Armand, what would become of us—if you—were to—be—ill—the babies and me. Good-night, dear."

And the loving wife resumed her dream.

At the other end of the room, tucked in her little crib, smiling and peaceful, her little hands clasped across her bosom, little Georget slept tranquilly.

A sudden storm of tears wet Armand's cheeks. He rushed to his desk, caught up a sheet of paper and wrote furiously.

At half past ten next morning a man, irreproachably clad in black, stood on the Vezinet field holding out a letter with agitated air to another individual, equally anxious and no less solemn.

"Is it possible?" cried the first.

"Simply incredible!" responded the second.

"He forgets himself and reflects upon us."

And with a grave air the two men advanced towards the opposing group, who were viewing these proceedings with a puzzled air.

"Messieurs," said one of the two, speaking clearly in the midst of a general silence; "we regret to announce that our principal and former friend, M. Armand Fougeret, will not be on the field to-day. He declines to fight. It is needless to add," continued he, replacing the hat on his head with a sweeping gesture, "that we are entirely at your service—in M. Fougeret's place."

RONALD MACLEAN.

✧ "Sandy Carmichael," ✧

BY

CUTCLIFFE & HYNE,

- - - - Author of "The Adventures of Captain Kettle," etc., etc. - - - -

THIS GRAND ROMANCE STARTS NEXT WEEK IN
 "SHORT STORIES."

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- How Erman sorcery failed to make water run uphill: how Murtagh O'Neill solved a simple problem in hydrostatics: how matrimony was suggested: and how a festival was interrupted by the ominous arrival of Dajian emissaries.
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- How the Dajian canoes landed on Erma: how a great battle was fought: and how Sandy Carmichael discouraged anthropophagy.
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- How the storming party was repulsed: how the retreat was continued to the mountain tops: how a raid was made for food: and how the Chief Sorcerer came to a bad end.
- How Sneyd and O'Neill decided to annex Ebry's quarters: how they returned to the mountain camp, and learnt of Norah's abduction: and how they schemed future plans.
- How Sneyd and O'Neill followed up Norah and her captors little by little: how they arrived in the nick of time at a certain hut: how the Dajians tried to roast them out: and how they walked through the flames unscathed.

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- How Sandy Carmichael stirred up the Ermans: how he led them to victory: how the Dajian canoes went away: and how the Ermans did homage to their King Alexander.
- How Sneyd and O'Neill vowed allegiance to King Alexander: how Norah was made Mrs. O'Neill: how a plan was schemed for the defence of the island: and how the same was carried into effect.
- How the brig *Eliza Williams* rescued two starving men from a canoe out at sea: how these two men were pressed on board H.B.M.S. *Serpent*, and met an old acquaintance in her captain: and how Sandy Carmichael, alias King Alexander, proved to be Henry Weldon Vivian, Esquire.

THE PURSE WITH THE RUBBER BAND.



CHIEF CONSTABLE PARKER'S term of office in an Australian town was drawing rapidly to a close. Although crime had been rampant during his reign, not one arrest of importance had been made. Of course, he would not be re-elected unless he redeemed himself.

"Rat-tat-tat."

"Come in," cried the chief.

The door opened slowly and a tall man, with a tall silk hat in his hand, entered. The hat showed frequent ironing, and his long coat was shiny at the seams. Even his shirt was limp, and his face unshaved.

"I see the chief, I presume?" spoke the stranger, in oily, inquiring tones.

"I am the chief."

"I suppose, sir, that you have a clerk within hearing here, so that no important information which comes to your ears may lack corroboration?"

"Well, ah, no. I've thought of that, but have been too busy to look after it. What is your desire?"

The stranger's eyes twinkled with satisfaction as he answered:

"My name, sir, is Paul Tracy. I am the manager of Tracy's Opera Company, which, for reasons financial, has been compelled to disband in your town. Now, suppose, my dear sir, that I should come to you and tell you that I had been robbed—that my purse containing thirty-one pounds four shillings and sevenpence had been taken from me by a highwayman, what would you do?"

"I would endeavour to recover the money and catch the thief."

"You would fail."

"Perhaps I should."

"Of course you would," responded Tracy; "of course you would, and then good-bye to your re-election, for I should make my loss public. Now, let me ask you how much this post is worth to you?"

"My salary is four hundred and fifty pounds a year."

"And how much can you earn if you lose it?"

"About three pounds a week, I should fancy."

"Exactly. One hundred and fifty pounds a year. This job, then, is worth three hundred pounds a year more than outside employment would be, and, besides, it

is more congenial. Now, I'll let you have it for one more term if you recover my purse with thirty-one pounds four shillings and sevenpence in it."

"What!" exclaimed Chief Parker. "How can you let me have another term? You are not even one voter, much less a majority."

"I suppose you know the value of advertising?"

"Yes."

"I come to your office to-morrow morning with a couple of reporters. I have told them my loss, and it has been printed in the morning papers with a fling at yourself. Of course they are assured of your failure, and I am consoled with on the way. We enter here. You invite us to be seated, and you go to your desk and unlock it. You produce a worn purse with a rubber band round it, and ask me if it is mine. I say 'yes.' You tell me to open it and count the contents. I find them correct—thirty-one pounds four shillings and sevenpence. Why, man, it will be like a chapter out of a French detective story. The newspaper fellows are amazed at your success, and the journals cover you with glory. The public reverses its decision, and you have a walk over. Do you agree?"

"But I don't think I can recover your purse."

"Great Scott, man! Can't you raise thirty-one pounds four shillings and sevenpence?"

"Why, yes. You mean——"

"There are plenty of old purses in the second-hand shops, and I see a couple of rubber bands on your desk."

"You mean that I shall make believe I recover your money?"

"Precisely."

"And, in fact, it must come out of my pocket?"

"That's it. You've got it at last."

"Well, I'll do it."

"Thank you. I'll wait on you then, to-morrow morning about eleven. Until then, good-bye."

"Good-morning, Mr. Tracy. How are you, gentlemen? Please be seated."

As Mr. Tracy and the two reporters sat down they

became conscious of another person in the room. A small, sharp-eyed man advanced from the window.

"I have the honour of presenting you to Mr. Hawkins. He is a member of our detective force, and will have a slight connection with this case. Mr. Tracy, I will ask you to describe your lost property, if you will."

"A worn leather purse held by a rubber band."

"And the contents?"

"Thirty-one pounds in gold, four shillings in silver, and seven pennies."

"Where did you get this money?"

"Why, I got it at the bank," replied Tracy slightly disconcerted.

"May I ask what bank?"

"The Victoria National."

"Have you got that, Mr. Hawkins?" asked the chief, turning towards the detective.

"I have," answered that person.

The chief stepped to his safe, and, unlocking it, took therefrom an old purse.

"Is this yours?" he said to Tracy.

"Yes," answered the ex-manager eagerly.

"Examine it, and see that the contents are all correct."

Tracy poured out the glittering coins on a table and counted them. Everything correct, even to the pennies.

"Are you sure, Mr. Tracy, that those are the same coins that you drew from the bank?"

"Quite sure. Here's a nick in one that I made with a penknife. I remember the dates also, for I always look at the dates on money."

"Is there no possibility, Mr. Tracy, that your money may have been changed by someone?" put in Hawkins.

"None whatever, sir. Why, I could swear to these coins in a court of law."

"Gentlemen," said the chief to the reporters, "will you be kind enough to take a look at that money?"

They did so.

"Mr. Parker," cried Tracy, in an irritated tone, "I came here to receive my property. If you have done with me, I will take it and go."

"I have done with you, sir; but I think Mr. Hawkins has not."

"What do you want with me?" Tracy angrily asked the detective.

"Your company to the gaol. Those coins are counterfeit. Hold out your hands, please."

Tracy was sold. He had drawn the web round himself. The cashier of the Victoria National Bank swore positively that he had never received any money from him.

Chief Constable Parker was re-elected by an overwhelming majority.

CHAS. SLADE.

CURED OF LOVE-SICKNESS.

At a meeting of the Medical Society, early in May, I read a report of some work that I had been doing with an improved stethoscope devised by the celebrated Hofbauer of Vienna, and threw in some remarks upon the theory of Nordau and others, that love is a disease, claiming that I had detected it in several hearts, and in one had succeeded in accomplishing a complete cure.

There was one listener to whom my words went straight as a message from Olympus. He called upon me somewhat more than a month after the date of that meeting.

He was a tall young fellow, of a very graceful figure. He had a well-shaped head, crowned with wavy yellow hair, strikingly contrasting with his dark, well-marked eyebrows and hazel eyes. He was extremely nervous, and his bearing suggested that of one who has just begun to suspect the presence of serious organic disorder.

"You have my card, doctor," said he. "I am Arthur Langford, son of Doctor Langford."

I replied that I was flattered he had consulted me instead of his distinguished father.

"I couldn't go to father about this," he said; and then added, with a nervous laugh: "I came to you as an expert."

"What seems to be the trouble?" I inquired.

He hesitated a moment, and then said:

"You remember the essay that you read before the Medical Society in May? Well, I was there with my father. That was after his accident, you know. I heard what you said about—about love. I have been thinking of it ever since, and I have come to ask you if it is true that love can be cured, like any other disease."

I was painfully in doubt as to the proper course to pursue. I might have told him the exact truth, and have sent him away without help or comfort, or it was open to me to hear his story, and do my best.

"What are the symptoms in this case?" I asked at last.

"They are very serious," he said. "You musn't think that I am altogether a fool. I haven't come on a mere boyish notion, but because I can't live much longer unless something is done for me. This woman that I love is not the most beautiful in the world—I wouldn't claim that. She is well born, and in every way high and noble. Yet it isn't that. It's because she is just herself, and there is no one else in the least like her."

His face was flushed, and his eyes shone wonderfully

bright. Suddenly the colour vanished from his cheeks, and the light from his eyes.

"She loves somebody else. I might as well tell you who it is; she loves Bertram, the artist—Walter Bertram. He's done something in the world, and that's more than I can claim, but he's nearly forty; and he's beginning to look it."

"I know him slightly," said I. "Are they engaged?"

"It isn't announced, but it's easy enough to see how matters stand."

"I thought she was away this spring," said I.

"What! You know who she is?" he exclaimed.

"I can't help thinking that you mean Miss Wilmot," was my answer; and he bowed his head reverently at the mention of the name.

"She got back to town on the the first of June," said he, after a pause; "and it began again, at once. Neither I nor any other fellow can get a chance to say two words to her. There doesn't seem to be any opposition from her people, and everybody expects the announcement of their engagement, and a wedding in the autumn."

"Which brings me back to the symptoms," said I.

He paused in his restless pacing of the floor, and gripped the back of a heavy chair with his long and delicately slender fingers.

"In the first place," said he, "I am dying for sleep. I think that in three weeks I have not slept half-an-hour at a time. When I lie down, I toss about for awhile; then fall asleep, and instantly wake up. I start up as if at a blow; it is the thought of her. A million times in a night I do this, and in the morning I am utterly exhausted. They say the Chinese have a torture like that, and it kills the victim in a little while. Then I can't eat. My father has noticed that, and he is worried about it. He has given me some medicine for it," and he laughed bitterly.

"You should see me try to work," he continued. "I simply cannot do it. I ought to tell you that I am an architect—only beginning, of course—but I have a fine chance, and everyone says I have unusual ability."

"Have you lost much in weight?" I asked.

"All I can," he said. "Look here."

He threw his coat upon the floor, and bared his arm. The muscles were startlingly defined. I passed my hands over his body, and made up my mind that he had lost all he could. Without considering fanciful theories, here was a love that was strictly pathological.

"I am beginning to notice a very annoying headache," said he. "It is right between my eyes, and it feels as if my head were being pressed together. There's a pain just under my heart, too, that's pretty bad at times."

"A nervous contraction," said I. "You'll be full of such pains if this thing does not stop. Can't you give up thought of her?"

"Not without your help."

"And are you sure that you want to?"

"Of course. Why am I here?"

"Very well," said I. "We will cure you and at once. But mind all this! All the responsibility is on you. Do not blame me afterwards."

If I had not been perfectly sure of the result, I should not have ventured on such a piece of charlantry; but it seemed necessary to clear his mind of the fanciful notions, under the influence of which he had been led to ask a magical cure from me. Once set him right in that matter, and he might be saved by proper means from the complete nervous collapse with which he was immediately threatened.

I mixed a dose of bromide of soda in a green goblet of very impressive appearance.

"Drink this," said I, "and you will cease to love her. Go on as you are going, and you will endure these tortures that you describe, and others that are worse. You will wreck your career, disappoint your parents, and gain absolutely nothing, so far as I can see."

He took the goblet in his hands, he raised it to his lips, then suddenly dashed it down.

"Utterly hopeless! Utterly hopeless!" he cried.

"Yet I would rather love her and die!"

He sank into a chair and sobbed.

"Just as I supposed," said I. "You don't want to be cured. Nobody does. A doctor who made a speciality of that wouldn't earn his rent. Since you don't want to get rid of it, let's build you up so that you can more thoroughly enjoy it."

"Enjoy it?" he groaned.

"Well, endure it, then, if you like the word better. Will you take the treatment that I will give you for a couple of weeks merely for the sake of the experiment and to satisfy me?"

After some difficulty I got him to promise, and for about the period named he was under my care. I succeeded in making him sleep, and inducing him to eat three meals a day, and he began to look and to feel a good deal better. One day he burst into my office, the picture of health and happiness.

"Doctor!" he cried, "I am cured. I've found the remedy for all the pangs of love. It's love cures love. It's love returned that has cured me. Doctor, she's mine!"

"Thank heaven!" I said fervently. "When did this happen?"

"Last evening," he replied, "I was at her house, and somehow I got the courage to say what was in my heart; and now it's all right. But suppose—suppose for just one instant that I had taken your cure and had lost this!"

"I don't care to think of it," said I; "it's a dangerous subject for a doctor to meddle with. I think I'll let it alone."

HOWARD FIELDING.





A CRY FOR HELP.

MANY of the occurrences which are now regarded, even by learned men, as manifestations of the supernatural, are capable of easy explanation by natural sciences. That they remain mysteries is often due to the fact—as we have already found in some instances—that the explanation is so easy that it either does not occur to us that it can be the true one, or that we reject it as improbable just because it appears to be so much more simple than we expected.

A mystery of this kind, with which was connected a page of the life drama of three persons, occurred a few years ago in New South Wales.

Extending for thousands of feet below the surface, and connected by numerous tunnels and leads, is a mine of rich magnetic iron ore famous throughout the colony. It has been worked for many years in the past, and will probably continue its yield for very many more years in the future, but there is one vein of the richest ore which is not now touched. It is looked upon as haunted for the reason which I am about to set forth; and although the mystery has been cleared up, the superstition is as strong as ever.

One day, some few minutes before the hour for leaving work, a big Irishman was working with his heavy sledge-hammer at the extremity of the tunnel where this vein is situated. He had paused for a moment to rest from his work, when he was startled by the sound of a voice coming from the wall of shining ore in front of him. He looked round with a scared face, but the next instant he laughed at his fears, and picked up his tool to continue his work.

"Be jabbers!" he muttered, "I'll tache thim to play tricks wid me."

But the heavy hammer which he had already raised for a blow fell from his hands, as, with a cry of horror, he started back. His face was blanched, his eyes glassy, and his hair seemed to be rising on end, as there came to his ears the clear sound of a voice on the other side of the wall, uttering a piteous appeal for help.

Tim O'Connor shook in every limb; he glared at the wall from which the sound proceeded. Then he heard it again:

"Help! Help! Oh, help!"

There was no mistaking the sound. It was the cry of some captive—someone entombed behind that wall. Tim had stood as though his feet were fixed to the spot, but at this last cry his fear gave him strength to move,

and he fled down the tunnel toward the main shaft, uttering loud cries for assistance.

As it happened, the foreman and three or four men were descending; the cage was stopped, they stepped out, and the foreman hastily inquired what was wrong.

It was some seconds before Tim could give a sensible reply. At first he could only point in the direction he had quitted and mutter fragments of words, but at last he was able to reply in a coherent manner.

"It's all rubbish, Tim," said the foreman, "there can't be anybody at the back of that wall—how can there be? Some hing has scared you. Here, come along with us, and we'll show you that there's nothing to be afraid of."

Somewhat unwillingly, Tim accompanied the foreman and the other men to the extremity of the lead. The foreman looked about by the light of his lamp, and all the men listened for the cry that Tim had heard; but they neither saw nor heard anything to confirm his story.

"I told you there was nothing," said the foreman, rather angrily. "Have you had anything strong to drink while you've been down—?"

He stopped abruptly. He had been standing close to the wall as he uttered the last words, and he had heard a sound that cut short his remarks. The abrupt ending of his speech created intense excitement among the others; all listened, and they heard what appeared to be the end of a cry:

"Oh, hel—!"

The excitement of the men now rose to fever heat. Every one of them had heard it, and there could be no doubt that it came from somewhere at the back of that mass of shining ore. Some poor fellow was entombed; but how did he get there? So far as they knew, no other lead came within considerable distance of it, and the ocean was above and beyond it.

The foreman felt that he could do nothing on his own account, but must communicate what had occurred to the manager.

The manager could not refuse to believe the evidence of all the men that they had heard a cry for assistance; and although he considered the thing impossible, he gave orders for half a dozen men to work away at the wall within certain limits. Beyond those limits they dare not go; if they did, the water would enter and the mine would be flooded.

Willing hands attacked at the wall, but although the

men—working that day and the next—penetrated as far as prudence permitted, there was no result. Yet that same evening the cry for help was heard again.

The affair created considerable stir, not only among the miners, but also among the people of the outside world. A rumour that that part of the mine was haunted quickly spread abroad. The men refused to work at that point, and curious people from outside visited Tunnel No. 6, in order to hear the ghostly cry. Among the latter were a well-to-do young Englishman and his sister, who had been living there for about a year, having inherited some property in the town.

Henry Chard was known among the residents as a dabbler in the occult sciences, and his sister was credited with the same liking for the mysterious. That they should desire to visit the mine and hear the cry was regarded as a matter of course, and the manager, who was on friendly terms with them, readily agreed to act as conductor.

"I can't promise you that you will hear it, Mr. Chard," said the manager. "Only two people, besides the miners, have heard it. Those who didn't hear it are disposed to think that they have been 'had.' The evening seems to be the best time; on each occasion it has been the evening when the cry has been heard. I confess that I haven't heard it myself, and am inclined to look upon it as an illusion."

The three descended in the cage, and made their way from the main shaft along the lead to the haunted vein.

"This is the spot," said the manager, as they arrived, "and this is just about the time when Tim O'Connor first heard the cry. You had better stand with your best ear quite close to the wall and keep silent."

It was a weird experience, and all three felt instinctively impressed by it. As the seconds went by, and they listened intently and expectantly, their nerves were strung up to the highest pitch. The manager forgot his anxiety concerning Miss Chard's powers of endurance in his own excitement. Would they hear anything? If so, what?

Suddenly, in the midst of the almost oppressive silence, there came in low but distinct tones:

"Help! Help! Oh, hel—!"

"There it is!" said the manager in a suppressed voice, which quivered with emotion, "did you hear it? Three call for help, just as O'Connor said! What can it mean?"

"Very strange," returned Chard. "It seemed as though the last word 'help' had been cut short. What do you think, Lucy?" he added, half turning to his sister. "What is the matter—are you ill? It has been too much for you."

She had clutched his arm, and he felt that she was trembling violently. He was about to put his arm round her to support her, but she pushed it aside.

"Listen!" she exclaimed, and her voice was strangely altered. "Listen carefully! The last word is not 'help.' Oh, Harry!"

Chard was moved and mystified by his sister's conduct, but all three listened for a repetition of the appeal.

"Help! Help! Oh, hel—! They will kill me here!"

There was an addition this time, and the words were followed by a noise which they likened to that of iron knocking against iron. Before either of the men could make any remark, Lucy uttered a scream and fell sobbing upon her brother's breast.

"Oh, Harry!" she sobbed. "It is Jack's voice! I recognised it distinctly."

"Come, come, my dear!" said Chard soothingly. "You are overwrought. This has been too much for you."

"Yes," added the manager sympathetically. "Let us be going from here. The place is haunted, sure enough."

"No, no!" returned Lucy Chard. "I tell you that it is the voice of our cousin, Jack Strong. I recognise the tone, and the last words is not 'Help,' but 'Hal,' and he is calling for you, Harry, to help him. Oh! stay and listen again!" she continued, releasing herself from her brother's embrace and wringing her hands. "Listen again, and you will see that I am right."

The manager shook his head incredulously, but all kept silence once more. After a few seconds they heard the appeal again. To the manager there was no difference in the sound of the third "help," but to Chard and his sister it was now plainly, "Oh, Hal!"

Without another word Chard turned to retrace his steps to the main shaft, drawing his sister gently with him; and it was not until they reached the surface either of the three spoke, and then it was only to say good-bye.

Chard was now inclined to his sister's opinion that the voice was that of their cousin calling upon him for assistance, yet it was so wildly improbable that he could not bring himself to believe that it was so. The last they had heard of him, he was travelling in Italy, that was three months ago, and although it was strange that they had not received any further letter from him, they did not apprehend any untoward occurrence. Had the voice come to them in their own room, they would not have been surprised; their belief in spiritualism prepared them for manifestations of that nature, but the fact that the voice was heard down a deep mine and in one particular spot, did not come within the range of their experience.

Yet both brother and sister were now certain that the words used were "Oh, Hal!" and not "Oh, help!" as the other hearers believed.

It was a strange fact that Henry Chard was called "Hal" by no one except his cousin and school-fellow, Jack Strong. The mystery was too deep for him to solve. Late into the night the brother and sister sat and discussed the matter from all possible standpoints without arriving at any key to the difficulty. They retired to bed, but neither slept till the early morning, when tired nature asserted her rights.

Day after day for nearly a week Henry and Lucy Chard visited the haunted vein. On the last occasion, Henry Chard told the manager when he reached the surface that he was going to leave the colony by the first steamer for England, where he would probably remain for some weeks. The next morning, Chard, in answer to the inquiries of the manager, whom he met near the mining company's office, explained the reason of his journey.

"My sister and my cousin are engaged, although, as in many other cases, there had been no formal declaration of the fact. Jack has business in England which he expected would keep him there for nearly two years after we left; then he was coming over here to settle with us."

"My sister is so convinced that she heard his voice in the mine that she will not rest unless either she or I undertake a journey to Europe and make a search for him. He was travelling when last she heard. If news is received from him after the steamer reaches England she will telegraph to me, and I am to keep her informed by wire of my whereabouts. If no news comes from this side my search will continue until I have found him or am convinced that he is dead."

"That seems somewhat quixotic, doesn't it?" asked

the manager. "You can't be absolutely certain that you are correct—"

"In any case," returned Chard, "my sister's happiness depends upon finding out what has really become of Jack. If I do not undertake the search, she will; and I can hardly permit that. I want you, Sims, to look after my sister as much as convention will allow while I am away. She will want to visit the mine pretty frequently, I expect; sometimes you can dissuade her, but at others it will be cruel not to humour her. I must leave that to your discretion. We have been good friends during the past year, Sims, and I want you to help me so far as you can in this difficulty."

"You may rely upon me, Chard," returned Mr. Sims, "and on my side I will see what can be done to elucidate this mystery. I intend to get the company to call in some scientific men and see if we cannot get to the bottom of it. When do you start?"

"I leave home in three days," returned Chard, "in order to catch the first steamer."

"Well, I hope that by the time you set foot on shore at Southampton, you will receive a wire from your sister or from me that the mystery has been solved, and that in return we shall receive a message from you that you have found your cousin alive and well."

Henry Chard left for Europe, and in course of time scientific men were at work endeavouring to clear up the mystery. Lucy Chard paid frequent visits to the mine, in company with the manager; it was generally supposed that she went there from her love of the occult, and that her brother had been called back to England on business, for the real facts were kept secret partly out of consideration for Lucy's feelings.

Weeks passed, and several scientific men endeavoured in turn to find an explanation for the sound of a voice in the haunted vein. The appeal for help was heard at intervals, almost always near the hour when the miners left off work. The scientific men formed the cries based on various natural phenomena; they made elaborate calculations and measurements to satisfy themselves that the manager was right in saying that it was impossible to penetrate the wall much farther without flooding the mine; they racked their brains to obtain some clue to the puzzle, and one after another they were forced to give it up.

No news was received from Strong, and Chard's messages conveyed no certain intelligence; he was seeking his cousin in different parts of Europe. At the end of three months there came a message from Chard to the effect that he was afraid his cousin had become mixed up with some political complication in Russia, and that he was doing his best to trace him in that country.

Two weeks later there arrived at Sydney two learned gentlemen—an Englishman and a German—who had come, with the latest scientific implements and theories, prepared to spend months in the mine with the view of solving the problem. They were devoted to science, and their expenses were to be paid by scientific bodies in their native countries.

These gentlemen set to work in real earnest. They made the usual calculations and measurements, they listened to the appealing voice, carefully arranged their sensitive seismic and other scientific instruments in position near the wall, and argued the matter from all points of view. Every law of magnetism and electricity, and transmission of sound, was called into requisition.

Their first theory was that the sound did not come from the back of the wall, but was transmitted from some other point of the mine. But it was not possible

now to believe that some one was entombed in the mine; such a captive would long ago have died of starvation, so that theory had to be relinquished. Other theories were formed and abandoned in like manner.

Lucy Chard occasionally accompanied these gentlemen when they descended into the mine to make their experiments, and they caught some of her excitement; this, combined with their own devotion to science, made them more determined than ever to surmount the difficulty. The solution came unexpectedly.

One evening the two scientists had arranged a phonograph and microphone close to the wall, for on the last occasion there had been another sound too indistinct for them to catch. They all waited and listened intently. Presently there came sounds which at first could not be properly distinguished. They almost imagined that a conversation was being carried on, and Lucy's nerves were so strained that she was trembling in every limb. Then the conversation became distinct, and although they could not hear all, the three listeners stood transfixed with amazement at what they did hear. To Lucy it was more clear than to the other two.

She knew that her brother had discovered Jack imprisoned in a cell and had found means of releasing him. The words: "Thank Heaven, you have come to release me, Hal!" were distinctly audible to all three.

Lucy's explanation of her brother's search gave the scientific men the clue to the mystery, which was afterwards explained by one of them in the following words:

"This rich vein of magnetic iron ore is in reality a natural telephone, and has transmitted to us the cry of a prisoner confined where the natural conditions were similar. The vein has served the purpose of a perfect conductor. If Miss Chard's idea is correct, the sounds have been transmitted from Siberia, and it is a fact that to the north of the Ural Mountains, in the bleak Obdorsk region, there is a valuable mine of superior magnetite, where prisoners are confined. As these great veins of loadstone trend north and south, and as that part of Russia is almost due north of us, it is not improbable, however much so it may appear to the non-scientific person, that we have been listening to a conversation going on in that dismal region. As a familiar name has occurred in the conversation, we must believe that this explanation is the true one. If Mr. Strong has been released by Mr. Chard, we shall not have long to wait for a confirmation of my statement."

It proved that Strong, who was warm-hearted, but certainly had no head for the revolutionary business, had become mixed up in some political trouble, and sent to the very mine mentioned by the scientist. He was imprisoned after the day's work in a cell, and in the agony of his mind he had often called upon his cousin for assistance.

Chard had traced little by little, and, having succeeded in rendering a service to one in authority in Siberia, had been able to procure his cousin's release on the expressed stipulation that Strong should leave Europe.

Although the authorities had no power to enforce this stipulation, the cousins gladly agreed to it, and took steamer to New South Wales as soon as Jack had settled what remained of his business in England.

Jack and Lucy were married soon after the two men reached the colony; but, as the whole affair quickly leaked out, they removed to another part of the colony, where Lucy was endeavouring to make Jack and herself forget that terrible experience.

M. WOODFORD.



SEVENTY-ONE

.. AND ..

SEVENTY-TWO.

THEY met at the Mont-de-Piété. This office of pledges and redemptions—this Parisian shrine of poverty and central altar of official usury—was crowded. A long line like a torpidly winding serpent stretched itself lazily far out into the Rue des Blancs-Manteaux. For several hours the clerk behind his grated window had dived out the numbers as he bent his worn face above the greasy book in which he is busy inscribing names and addresses.

"Again? So soon? And still pretty," with a vicious smile. "Lace pin—with small diamond—hum! Twenty francs for Seventy-one. Pass on quickly! Next! Well? And you? A carved crucifix. Ivory? No. Five francs for Seventy-two."

"No more?"

"No more. Take or leave: You detain the others. Decide."

Number Seventy-two hesitates. Suddenly a rough hand tugs at her shabby shawl. She turns. It is number Seventy-one. A moment later the two girls stand side by side in the street.

"Here. Take this," mutters Seventy-one. "I insist. I stole your luck by my odd number. Besides—it is to cheat the devil. No? Why? What a little fool!"

Seventy-two has a face of pale flame. Her lips are blue; and much shivering has rounded her thin shoulders. Seventy-one is read easily, a feminine gamin. She thrives on Paris as a dandelion flaunts from the crevice of paving stone. The one is smiling, yet dumb with amazement. The other talks, laughs, yet will never smile again.

"Tut! A few francs. What are they to me? and I shall redeem my pin to-morrow, while you"—a glance completed the sentence.

"And I—it was that I might celebrate Paul's fête day—"

"You live—"

"At No—an attic in the Rue Sainte Marguerite. He—Paul—works at the theatre. It is a good position, but it is necessary that he appear well to keep it. This eats his earnings as a moth eats feathers. We are from the South—Paul and I. He is happy here—but I—"

"Amuse yourself by starving that he may—oh! I understand. Here!"—and she draws her into a wine shop. "Waiter! A basket! Now fill it, pate—some of those. 'Tis I who shall supply Paul's feast. But on one condition my friend—that you eat half. And the wine is for you." Paying the waiter, Seventy-one drops the change into the loaded basket.

"And I who accept this—do not yet know your name." Seventy-two is grateful, but there are no tears. Tears are a luxury with the poor.

"Call me number Seventy-one."

"I shall call you—my saint."

"Anything but that, my girl. Well, Seventy-two, I shall see you again." And she watches her stagger away beneath her burden.

"Mademoiselle is generous," ventures the waiter who has followed them outside the shop.

"Nonsense! It is my whim. She is a dying girl. It is written. And her Paul. A fine, selfish scamp. I'll warrant." And with a laugh and a whirl on her heel she hurries away.

* * * * *

One year in a Parisian garret. One year of green country quiet exchanged for the lullaby of Paris—that mother who often sings her babies to their deaths.

To be sure, there has always been Paul, and looking in his eyes Jeanne could forget her home-sickness. And with his arm for a pillow, her straw had not seemed such a hard bed. But he was forced to be at the theatre early and late. And nowadays his absences were growing longer. Jeanne fancied at times that he was less tender. Paul was tired—tired of being poor. Was it that Poverty was pinching Love to death? She did not know—but felt a chill about

her heart—a dangerous thing when the body is also cold.

Someone else would beat the ragout on Paul's next fête day. But Paul came and went, and noticed nothing.

One night in his sleep Jeanne heard him utter a name.

She leant to listen, but he said no more, only smiling in his sleep. She thought it was "Susanne." In the morning she questioned him.

"I was dreaming. What of it?" said he, evading her eyes.

Before he went away that morning he drew her fondly towards him, and tenderly kissed her rough and reddened slender hands. It was a revival of love, Jeanne thought, and sang softly to herself all that day. Life was easier after this. Paul grew more kind, and a new pleasure was also hers.

She did not know that it was a man's way when he loves one to kiss the other dumb.

And every day at noon her "saint" came for an hour. Every day in some small way, Jeanne's small wants grew smaller. Every day Seventy-one sat beside Seventy-two upon the low straw pallet, and laughed and jested until Jeanne grew merry from sheer contagion.

"We will thank her together when you are well again, my Jeanne, and find out her real name," Paul would say in his absent-minded way.

When Jeanne was well again.

One morning she seemed suddenly so weak that Paul found it impossible to leave her. For the first time he became uneasy. She did not complain, merely remaining strangely quiet. And her eyes shone as on that night beneath the lindens long ago; the night they first spoke of a marriage—their own.

"But it is nothing," she murmured, while her starry eyes looked past him across the glaring roofs so coldly bright in the wintry sunlight. It was broad day in Paris, but in Jeanne's life candle-time had come.

"Paul!"

"My Jeanne!"

"You love me?"

"My little one. How can you ask? You break my heart!"

"As dearly as ever, Paul?"

"As dearly as ever." And Paul softly stroked a very happy face.

Just then, above the lullaby with which Paris was singing Jeanne to sleep, some rollicking distant bells rang out the hour. Jeanne raised herself upon her elbow, and with one hand threw back the drooping locks from her little white ears.

"Hark!"

As they listened they heard a merry clatter of high heels on the bare staircase.

"It is number Seventy-one!"

As she spoke a piquant figure stood framed within the low doorway.

"Paul!—my saint!"

And then the two stood alone in the little sunny garret, for just at that moment Jeanne's soul fled.

"Susanne! You—her saint!" and with a hoarse cry Paul dropped the dead hand on the straw.

"And so—to her, you were Paul! Great Heaven!"

And Jeanne?

A little smile stole softly about her lips. It was Death, who in joke had tricked Life out of one sorrow.

JESSIE MILLER.

"Did you hear Kusser has dyspepsia?"

"No. How did he get it?"

"Slugem made him eat his own words."

TOMMY: "Oh, father, mother said she was a donkey."

Father: "I am glad to hear she told the truth for once, my boy."

Tommy: "Yes, she said she was a donkey to have married you."

FLOSSIE: "Are you sure you love me, and that you'll never look at another woman?"

Willie (fervently): "Yes, on my honour."

Flossie (coldly): "No, then; I don't want to marry a freak."

JOHNNY grumbled at his small share of pudding one day.

"It's a liberal helping," said his mother.

"Then I'll have a conservative helping," said Johnny and wanted to take the dish. Oh, these political kidlings!

RESULT OF DISTRIBUTION No. 8.

ONE half of the sovereigns offered this week were set aside for the members of the great Jones family. One of them has been claimed by:

Mrs. A. JONES, 10 Whitworth Place, Plumstead, Kent.

Four of the remaining twenty-five sovereigns have been applied for by:

H. PELLING, 21, Temple Street, Brighton.

E. A. WALTON, 103 Fitzwalter Road, Sheffield.

A. SWEET, 50 Portman Street, Rowbarton, Taunton.

F. WOODFORD, Stamp Office, Poole, Dorset.

The unclaimed sovereigns were addressed to:

A. D. Allan, 458 Gallowgate, Glasgow; Jabez Attwood, Union Street, Stourbridge; A. C. Quick, Church Square, Guernsey; Miss E. Beal, 33 Basuto Road, Poole Park, Fulham; J. Ramsden, 176 Albemarle Street, Ashton-under-Lyne; G. F. Matthews, 20 West Street, Chichester; Miss A. Bullock, Blaby House, Drayton Road, King's Heath, Birmingham; G. F. Saunders, 37 North Road, Bishopton, Bristol; Mrs. Reichert, 5 Windermere Villas, Tottenham Lane, Hornsey; T. Carpenter, 17 Bridge Avenue, Hammersmith; J. Jackson, 5 Hanover Place, Coleraine; J. Begrie, 172 Causewayside, Edinburgh; T. E. Gooden, 19 Park Street, Bolton; Jos. Broster, Band, H.M.S. *Ganges*, Falmouth, Cornwall; G. Singler, 57 Poplar Walk, Herne Hill, S.E.; S. K. Hocking, 18 Avenue Road, Crouch End, N.; John White, Livery Stables, The Avenue, Minehead; W. Toon, Grove Villa, West End, Farnham; Jas. Rees, 43 Surrey Street, Ryde; Geo. Hall, 3 Regent Street, Hinkley, Leicestershire; J. Steel, 89 Frankfort Street, Gateshead; J. B. Jones, Church Road, Redditch; Miss Jones, High Street, Wallingford; J. Jones, Red Lion, Corn Street, Witney; W. B. Jones, farmer, Barrow-on-Humber; Mrs. Jones, The Manor House, Finchley; Miss C. Jones, 2 Crescent Terrace, Cheltenham; John Jones, Barrack Street, Castlereagh; Mrs. Jones, 1 Solent Place, Bath Road, Lyngington, Hants; W. Jones, Newport Road, C.wes; Mrs. Fenton-Jones, 12 King Edward Street, South Hackney; A. Jones, 21 Silver Street, Wisbech; W. R. Jones, 128 Denmark Road, Lowestoft; Mrs. Jones, Downham, Norfolk; H. Jones, Strafford Villa, Moorgate Road, Rotherham; F. Jones, 4 Howden Place, Leeds; Thos. Jones, Station Road, Wombwell; Miss Jones, 8 Studley Road, Harrogate; Thos. Jones, 18 The Lound, Kendal; E. Jones, Tiffin Lane, Workington; T. A. Jones, Smedley Street, Matlock; Jas. Jones, Hoo Ash House, Ravenstone, Ashby-de-la-Zouch; S. Jones, 5 Trinity Street, Stockton-on-Tees; O. G. Jones, Staff Sergt.-Major, 8 Albany Place, York Town, Surrey; Geo. Jones, Sandy Lane, Workop.



THE FINAL WAR

BY
LOUIS TRACY.

Author of "The Shadow Hand," "An American Emperor," "The Lost Provinces," etc.

CHAPTER XLII. THE SHADOW OF DOOM.

In one of the chief streets of St. Petersburg stands an imposing house, whose bold façade seems to challenge the gaze of the passer-by and to thrust itself forward with proud security in that great City of Despair.

No one would dream of associating it with intrigue or crime. Not the secret police themselves, as they slunk along in unsleeping watchfulness, had ever looked upon it with distrust. As its powerful owner passed in and out, he was greeted with deference; for his influence was great in high quarters, and his arm was long and merciful.

And yet within a fortnight of the passing of the British army into Central Asia, a strange meeting and a strange conversation took place within this princely house, which would indeed have exercised the speculation of the police could they have been present in secret.

On a certain afternoon in June, an officer of the Imperial Guard sat in the spacious library, engaged intently in examining a series of maps and statistical tables which lay exposed, carefully drawn and coloured, with many curious marks and signs, upon the table. He wore the rich uniform of the royal service, but he was clearly not occupied at the moment with royal business.

It was Pochowski, the man of many parts—now lionised as a Russian tenor in London drawing-rooms, now a humble valet in the service of a British ambassador—now an



He was greeted with deference.

imperial officer—clearly one of varied acquirements and singular adaptability—practised in disguise, and playing in the seclusion of his own house alone his real part.

He looked up from the documents he was examining, and hastily glanced at the clock. Then he drew down the shutter of his desk, threw himself into an easy-chair and waited.

His thoughts wandered to the stupendous, the sublime task which he had made the object of his life's mission, a task to which he had sacrificed everything, love, honour, happiness, and for which he had courted danger and death.

For he was one of the brave champions of Russians freedom. He strove to attain nothing less than the liberty of his native land and the deliverance of her people. And now the hour seemed to approach, the hour of destiny, for him, for the throne, for the great Empire of the East.

"Count Lucovitch, sir."

It was his servant who thus broke in upon his reveries.

Pochowski rose. As he did so, a tall officer, of noble aspect, with stern, resolute face, and firm stride, entered the room and bowed with a touch of ceremony.

"You have not failed me," said Pochowski. "We have but one hour and we must lose no time."

"An hour? What do you mean?" asked his visitor in surprise.

"Count," said Pochowski gravely, "in an hour the fate of Russia will be decided. We shall meet the Provincial Presidents. We shall decide whether we shall take this supreme opportunity which Providence has given us, of winning independence for our country and freedom for our people, or let the tale of Russian servitude roll garrulously on for another century."

"I have consented to discuss with you, Captain," Lucovitch observed, "this torturing position. I have not consented to take a part; much less to give assent so soon. Our country is now in danger. Is it not the first duty of patriotism to rid our shores of foreign enemies before we turn to rend ourselves?"

Pochowski took from a cabinet at his side a bundle of papers and rapidly glanced through them.

"These are the reports handed to me as Supreme Head of the Nihilist Party," he said at last. "At the present moment there are 640,000 of Russia's bravest sons ready

to take the field if called upon to vindicate their liberties. It needs but a word, and a vast host of indomitable spirits will swarm round the capital and crush it in their grip."

"What!"
of horror,
beset?"
claimed



"Count Lucovitch, sir."

of destiny. The whole world is fighting its great battle of independence. Do you think this is merely a squabble of nations, merely a bout between England and her foes? You cannot. It is a war of principles. Oppression is striving for universal despotism. Liberty is striving for universal peace, for the true brotherhood of man. If England is beaten, we are all beaten, humanity is beaten with her. The light of freedom goes out; man crawls back into his chains; the dungeon once more gapes open. Yes, in such a struggle mere selfish and narrow patriotism is swallowed up. We must side, not with Russia or with England, but with right or wrong, with peace or war, with liberty or servitude. And in such a moment are we, of all men, who suffer most, who have most to gain, to throw in our strength with the forces of evil, and hurl back the splendid birth-hour of a universal freedom? No, Count, your heart is too generous to harbour such a thought. We call upon you to become our general in the field. To you is intrusted the task of leading an invincible army to certain victory in a holy cause."

Pochowski's eyes glowed as he spoke thus passionately, and a pallor came over the Count's face. He was visibly moved.

"All this I see and admit," he remarked after a pause. "But I am a soldier, and how can I side with the invaders of my own country? It is this that haunts and disturbs me. How can we, in the cause of Russia, call in Russia's foes?"

"I might reply," answered the other quietly, "that in freedom's cause it is both natural and usual. Did not England call Holland in to help her, and America, France? Nay, the Dutch, too, sought the armies of Germany, and Germany those of England. And who more fit to help us than the great nation which has made liberty her watchword and is the bulwark of humanity? But I will not urge such pleas. Count, there is another point of view which I will lay before you."

"Ah! You have some scheme?"

"Let us be diplomats as well as soldiers," tranquilly replied Pochowski. "I will place before you the two only possibilities. I reject Russia's victory over England. You yourself cannot deny that, in such an event, our cause is lost for ever. Not we alone but the whole earth will groan in servitude. Such a prospect we cannot even glance at. Let us, I say, reject it. Now, in the first place, England may conquer the Tsar and his armies—I do not say Russia, for it will not be Russia. The true Russian secretly longs for England's victory. England may conquer—I say she must and will conquer—the Tsar's armies. She will sweep

over our country and seize the capital. We shall be in the grip of a foreign nation. She will dictate her terms to us. Mind you, I do not fear that. I should welcome it, for I have confidence in England. She will give us our liberty. She will drive away the baneful breed of despots whose madness it is to believe themselves God-ordained autocrats of countless subjects. But how do you like such a situation? Would you prefer to have your rights given to you, not by yourself, or by your Tsar, but by a foreign power? Do you prefer that we shall be pensioners on the good will of an alien race?"

The Count ground his teeth, but made no other reply. Pochowski went on:

"Well, there is your prior alternative. You do not care for it. Exactly! I guessed so. Then what is left? Clearly the course I have been advocating. If we do not care to have our freedom given to us—thrown to us—we must take it ourselves. And how? It is simplicity itself. We must summon together all the forces that we have, rouse Russia to her heart, seize the Capital, dethrone the Tsar, and make ourselves masters of our own dominions. Having done that, we shall ourselves extend the hand of alliance to our invader, cancel the war, make our peace, give her indemnity, bid her retire, and then avoid the unlovely spectacle of our capital invested, and arrangement of amnesty that shall be honourable to all. Is not that the only prudent—nay, the only noble—course that is open to us?"

Pochowski waited for a few moments whilst he allowed his words to sink into the heart of his hearer.

"But your Nihilist army," said the Count, after some reflection, "it is but a poor, ungoverned horde."

Pochowski smiled.

"You may be pardoned the belief, Count," he replied: "it is a mistake that is carefully cultivated. But do you really believe that these poor wretches who throw about bombs and assault innocent people are the heads and leaders of our great movement? Let me assure you that they are rebels to the cause rather than its guides. We cannot restrain misguided fanatics; there must always be some madmen in so great a multitude of oppressed. Nay, we cannot even direct and be certain of them. There may yet be outrage. But it is abhorrent and abominable to me, to all our officers, to the great mass of our people, and, above all, to the cause. Believe me that neither the People's Right nor the People's Will dominate to our movement. It is in high quarters, amongst men of rank and position, amongst our officers, wherever true greatness of soul animates a clear intelligence, that you must seek our leaders. When the time comes you will be amazed. Your neighbour to right and to left, your superior officer, your intimate friend, the nobleman whose patronage you seek—all will be found staunch and courageous champions of the cause. The real chivalry of Russia is on our side."



Pochowski held out his hand.

"Good Heavens!" exclaimed the Count amazed. "Do you mean that the Count itself is so deeply tinged by it?"

"Wait!" was Pochowski's reply, and he smiled grimly as he spoke. "You will see, when the moment comes, how pitifully isolated, how tragically alone, is the race of the Romanoffs. There are those upon their side, we will grant—a few fanatics like themselves, some trained to the hateful

and insidious lie which support a despot's throne, most mere office-bearers and self-seekers, petty tyrants whose power is part of the greater power we seek to destroy. But when the hour of danger is at hand, how many of these will stand by and give their lives for a hopeless cause?"

The Count rose and paced the room, and as he moved the watchful eyes of his host followed him. At length he turned, and, approaching Pochowski, said:

"Either way there is something that is distasteful. But it may be that personal pride, perhaps even personal honour, must yield to a greater principle. I have heard your arguments and admit them. I will do what you say. I will command your army, and will even lay hands upon His Majesty. But upon one condition. It is that there must be no swerving from the policy you have outlined. We, the people of Russia, shall fight our own battle of liberty, and then supreme in our own capital, bid England retire. We will grant what terms she demands. But it must be our defence that we would ourselves spare Russia the degradation of a hostile investment, and since our government is so mad as to seek our own humiliation—that we throw it aside the better to protect the honour of our native land."

These words, spoken with quite dignity, moved his hearer. Rising to his feet, Pochowski held out his hand.

"May I die the death of a traitor and be despised of all men," he said, "if I am guilty of thought, word, or deed that is dishonourable to the true cause of patriotism."

The two men gripped each other's hands. Each was affected by the tragedy of this solemn dedication.

"It is one of the greatest moments of the world's history. So must Brutus and Cassius have felt when they swore alliance for the death of Cæsar!" It was the Count who spoke.

"I accept the omen!" cried Pochowski. "So may the new Cæsar be overthrown, and no new Anthony undo our work. But our hour is up. You must come with me. Henceforth we shall have little time for speech."

The two officers descended the stairs, and, entering a carriage already awaiting them, drove rapidly off.

"Conspiracy does not always conceal itself!" declared the Count almost gaily.

"Conspiracy that conceals itself," observed Pochowski, "acknowledges itself already beaten. We are safe because we are too transparent. If you wish to avoid detection, do not shun the policeman; make love to his daughter!"

Thus jesting, they passed through some of the spacious streets of the Capital, until they reached a noble house, palatial in size, and buried amongst trees already heavy with summer foliage.

The Count started.

"Duke Paul's!" he exclaimed in amazed tones.

Pochowski nodded.

"He cannot help us, but he is with us. Blood ties cannot be rudely broken. But he is a generous patriot, and throws around us his protection. Do you not know that through his influence alone our great teacher, Tolstoi, has escaped persecution?"

The Count looked further mystified. But he made no reply. In a few moments they had entered.

Without delaying, Pochowski and his companion pressed forward, and passing through a door at the end of the

passage, descended into a spacious apartment, where, scattered about in little groups, sat a score or so of men.

They rose to their feet as the President entered, and, as they observed the Count, exchanged looks of mutual satisfaction.

Proceeding to a raised chair at the end of the room, and keeping the Count by his side, Pochowski called upon the delegates assembled to make their statements.

It appeared that European Russia was divided into twenty-eight districts, each of which had several subdivisions. In every district was a Nihilist officer of repute, whose duty it was to keep himself accurately informed of the number and strength of the multitude under his control. He was unknown to any save the sub-officers, and his sympathy with the popular party had never created a moment's suspicion in the minds of the bureaucracy. On this fateful day, summoned by urgent messages, they assembled to report themselves and to deliberate on the great step that was about to be taken.

Each in turn rose and made his brief speech. And every speech was as satisfactory as it was terse. It appeared that there were, in all, nearly 700,000 sturdy enthusiasts ready when called upon to take the field. Some of them had been trained in war, many had been exercised in drill and with the rifle. Animated by a fierce indomitable spirit of patriotic ardour, they formed a superb army which, distracted by a double invasion, the Tsar would find difficult, nay impossible, to withstand.

"You have made it clear," demanded Pochowski, when they had done, "that there is to be no outrage, no individual violence, no private revenge? And you have forbidden dynamite and such brutal instruments of carnage?"

There was a common assurance of this.

"I have done all I can," observed one (he was President of the Moscow District), "but I guarantee nothing. There are fanatics who will promise anything, but can never be trusted. Moscow," he added significantly, "has suffered much from the Imperial scourge."

"It is instant death to anyone who violates the strict rule of war," replied Pochowski sternly, and his brow became overcast. "Meanwhile, I have the pleasant tidings to impart that Count Lucovitch has consented to take supreme command in the field. He will meet you here to-morrow and give you full instructions. The blow must be struck at once."

There was a murmur of approval at this intelligence, and the officers pressed round the Count, whose knowledge of military tactics was held in high regard, and congratulated him upon the noble part he had consented to play in the liberation of his country.

"It is not altogether with a glad heart, gentlemen," he responded; "but I cannot oppose my private feelings to the supreme considerations that are before us. We shall at least be allies of England and not dependents. Our cause is the same. We fight for the liberation of Russia, and she for the liberation of the world."

In another hour's time, after some consultation and much anxious questioning, the two Nihilist chiefs drove off. Neither of them slept that night. Until early the next morning they were deep in discussion and in the examination of charts and reports and in searching criticism of the position. Before St. Petersburg rose for its breakfast its fate was determined.

And thus, when England was hurling her splendid armies upon the shores of Russia, a terrible and irresistible danger grew to monstrous maturity in the very heart of the empire, and the grim shadow of fate was creeping upon the throne itself.

It was a situation worthy of the Greek tragedian. Whilst exultant despotism, arrogant in its supremacy, was stretching out its hand for its final crown, its doom was already pronounced and its end prepared.

Dramatic irony such as this Sophocles himself would have appreciated.



Pochowski called upon the delegates to make their statements.

CHAPTER XLII

RODNEY BECOMES AN ADMIRAL.

EARLY in July the leading detachments of the Indian army began to reach Uzun Ada, and the Naval Brigade was hurried forward among the first arrivals.

Rodney was now in command of this small party of three hundred sailors, as the senior officer originally selected for the post had the misfortune to fall ill shortly after the defeat of Alikhanoff on the banks of the Helmund.

Sir George White, the Commander-in-Chief, and his staff also travelled rapidly to the front, as the wholly unexpected success of Peyton's operations in Transcaspia had changed the aspect of affairs very materially. The government of India had always contemplated the possibility of rudely upsetting Russia's preponderance in Central Asia, but the idea of marching the Indian Army to Moscow was generally regarded as a fantastic dream which must be utterly subjugated to the practical project of breaking down the Muscovite sway on the Northern confines of Afghanistan.

But the seizure of the Transcaspian railway, and Applin's remarkable capture of nearly every available steamship on the Caspian, had altered the entire position.

Not only was Russia compelled to marshal her first line of defence to meet the British attack on the Black Sea littoral, but her Caucasian army was unable to cross the Caspian to attempt the reconquest of the lost provinces, and it now became a matter of choice between developing the movement from India into a determined effort to penetrate to the capital, and quietly consolidating resources around Merv and on the Oxus, to await the outcome of events in European Russia.

In view of these two courses it was plain that Sir George White and his men were inclined to the more audacious one.

Rodney was in Uzun Ada two days before the Commander-in-Chief, and he lost no time in examining the fleet. There were, in all, seventeen steamships, for which petroleum supplied the motive power. But they were small, with limited deck capacity, and, at the utmost stretch of accommodation, barely capable of bringing 10,000 men across the Caspian.

This inland sea, too, is liable to severe and unheralded storms, so that to crowd men into the wretched native craft that swarmed in the harbour, attracted thither by the news that roubles were now unusually plentiful, was to court disaster, whilst to attempt to occupy Baku with a small force meant absolute annihilation at the hands of Russia's best troops, the army of the Caucasus.

Rodney knew that the problem, tough as it was, must be solved somehow. He found Applin to be a congenial spirit, and discussed it with him. As the result, they went on a tour of inspection to the timber-yards and locomotive shops.

When Sir George White arrived he sent for Rodney.

"Well, sir," he said genially to Frank, "now that you are the Admiral, I must ask you how you propose to carry my army across to the other side."

"At the end of six days," said Rodney. "I will be able to land 100,000 men simultaneously at any point you may select within about thirty-six hours from the time of departure from this port."

"What?" shouted the Commander-in-Chief, astounded at this reply. "Surely it is impossible! They can't swim there, you know."



They went on a tour of inspection.

The sailor modestly declaimed any such flight of genius as was suggested by the retort. He explained that there were eighty engines at present gathered on the sidings at Uzun Ada, together with 2,000 waggons. There was an ample supply of timber available elsewhere, and he believed that by utilising the labour of every man in the place, something like forty gigantic rafts could be rapidly knocked together, whilst two engines per raft might be converted, with equal ease, into a modified form of the American rear-driving paddle-wheel principle. Each raft would hold 2,000 men with stores. They would be fitted with sweeps to take out the steam power, and the steamers would accompany them to safeguard against accident. The remainder of the troops could go on the steamships, and in the best of the native craft, but very few horses could be taken in the first expedition.

Rodney came to the interview prepared with plans and estimates of labour, and five minutes after the Commander-in-Chief was made fully acquainted with the details he accorded his hearty approval to the proposal, and the naval officer was given *carte blanche* with regard to men and money.

As the work went on it was deemed desirable to reduce the number of troops to 75,000, and to increase the space for horses and guns. Never stranger craft navigated the sea than these ingeniously constructed rafts, which when fully loaded were almost submerged. But the locomotives, fixed fore and aft, were placed on elevated platforms, and the first experiment showed that with steam alone a speed of two miles an hour was obtainable, whilst with long sweeps, each manned by twenty strong-armed soldiers, this rate of progress was almost doubled.

Tommy revelled in the congenial task of christening these giant monsters. Officially, they were known by numbers, but this suited not the eclectic taste of the "swaddy."

Thus, No. 1 was called "Sudden Death," because a structural weakness at one end caused the sensational disappearance of an engine into the depths of the Caspian during the trial trip. No. 2 became "Lady Godiva," on account of a certain simplicity in outline which was found to be most convenient after experiment had shown the faults of the first construction. Nos. 5 and 7, built side by side, were dubbed respectively "Caster" and "Pole-axe."

"Admiral" Rodney hoisted his flag on the *Sarmarkhand*, the largest and most powerful of the Baku-Uzun Ada fleet, and it was a proud moment for him when he led the gigantic procession of ships, rafts and dhows through the tortuous entrance channel and out into the open sea.

Everyone believed that an attack was to be made on Baku.

An unwonted degree of openness was manifested by Sir George White in discussing the possibilities of effecting a surprise during the hours of darkness by an unexpected landing in that neighbourhood, and the imprisoned officers of the Caspian steamers were closely questioned as to the conformation of the coast-line and the main features of the approach by water, with the possibilities of defence.

There was consequently much perturbation when it was discovered, on the morning of July 27th, the day fixed upon for the sailing of the expedition, that a steam-launch had been mysteriously cut from her moorings in the night and was now well on her way to Baku, with half-a-dozen Russian officers on board.

The people who seemed to care least about the occurrence were those primarily responsible for it.

Sir George White and Rodney were supremely indifferent to the obvious fact that, thus forewarned, the Grand Duke Paul would make it very hot indeed for the invaders, but this nonchalant attitude was somewhat explained when the troops saw the sun rise over the waste of waters after their first night on the rafts, and found that instead of sailing due west to Baku they were heading north-west to Petrovsk.



"Well, sir," he said genially to Frank, "now that you are the Admiral, I must ask you how you propose to carry my army across to the other side."

"We are a lot of silly jossers," said the humble philosopher of the Royal Fusiliers whom we met before at Karachi. "Anybody with a grain of sense could ha' seen that we shouldn't land on the south side of the Cowkysus. We're a-going to Mosky we are, an' it ain't likely we'd stick a lot of bloomin' mountings in the way when we can sail round 'em. There's no flies on Sir George, is there?"

There were no flies on Private Watson either. He had correctly read the Commander-in-Chief's strategy, and at dawn on the following morning he and the rest of the 7th, with some Ghurkas and Bengal Infantry, occupied two lively hours in clearing Petrovsk of the few Russian troops who held it.

The work of disembarkation proceeded rapidly. As fast as

regiments landed they were hurried forward through the town to occupy a low range of foot hills through which ran the line to Moscow, Petrovsk being the terminus of that railway on the north of the Caucasian range.

It was well that great energy was shown in the matter, as the Russians, though taken by surprise, strove bravely to remedy their mistake, and it was clear, from the rapid concentration of troops that was going on some few miles inland, that a determined assault would be delivered on the British at the earliest possible moment.

It came, hotly enough, during the afternoon.

The Russian general in command at Vladikavkaz hurried up some 20,000 infantry, three sotnias of Cossacks, and fifty guns, and dashed at the English position with great intrepidity.

So severe and determined was the assault that it assumed the character of a hand to hand struggle. Reinforcements were arriving on both sides, but it was far easier for the Russians to hasten up their supports than for the Indian army, with inadequate-landing places, without cranes or steam power on shore, and delayed by the unwieldy nature of the rafts in a shallow harbour abounding in sand-pits—distant also some miles from the scene of the encounter—to strengthen the fighting line.

From the beginning of hostilities the advance division was outnumbered. It suffered terribly from the fact that the Russian guns were unopposed by artillery, and Sir George White, who conducted the defensive operations in person, was devoutly thankful when Colonel Doyne's brigade of cavalry appeared in the rear.

This consisted, it will be remembered, of the 4th Royal Irish Dragoon Guards, the 5th Lancers, the 2nd Bengal Lancers, and the 7th Bengal Cavalry.

The afternoon was well advanced as they came up at the trot, but the blazing sun still rode high in

the heavens, and the drifting sand-clouds obscured everything in the front, except that through the murky air occasional puffs of smoke, and deep red jets of flame showed where the devastating guns of the enemy were located.

After a weary plod through the sands, Colonel Doyne wisely relegating the pace to a walk, the troopers reached the right of the fighting line.

The sun at last set over the distant hills in a deep crimson glow, but the dust still rising over the scene rendered any intelligible idea of what was going on impossible to the newcomers.

The Royal Fusiliers and the Hampshire Regiment were at this moment bearing the brunt of the attack, both regi-

ments being in extended order, with the 5th Ghurkas and the 2nd Bengal Infantry in support.

The Russians kept up a furious cannonade, firing salvoes of six guns with shrapnel, and Colonel Mortimer, of the Fusiliers, who commanded the fighting line, sent word to Sir George White that he could only hold his position and attack the enemy's skirmishers, whilst an advance was out of the question.

The Commander-in-Chief dispatched a *aide-de-camp* to acquaint Colonel Doyne with the position of affairs, and to ask him if he thought his brigade could silence the guns.

The cavalry commander answered with a smile: "I will try." He at once gave the necessary orders for the performance of his desperate plan, which was to deliver an unexpected attack upon the enemy's right—this, too, during the uncertainty of darkness, and against unknown odds.

The brigade moved quietly off without attracting Russian notice, and they were soon completely hidden from view by the undulating ground.

With the sudden change peculiar to the region, darkness, was now fast setting in, although but little more than an hour previously the sun was visible. The moon rose soon after, and there was something inexpressibly weird in the strange spectacle of the dark mass of men and horses silently advancing through the now almost insupportable dust-clouds, whilst through an occasional rift a bright steel scabbard or glittering curb-chain would gleam for an instant.

Meanwhile the noise and turmoil and lurid blaze of the conflict raging on the left only became more fearful in their intensity.

At last the brigade crossed the intervening ridge, having gained the position desired by Colonel Doyne, and as the dense body of moving cavalry showed against the bright background of moonlit sky and arid earth, they were perceived by the enemy.

Directly in front, and about three-quarters of a mile away, were the guns, and as soon as the Russians became aware of the existence of a British force in this new direction, they devoted all their attention to the movement. Twenty guns quickly changed front and shells soon screamed through the air, shrapnel exploded and sent its missiles tearing and hissing on all sides, whilst the numerous tiny flashes in the enemy's lines, followed by the pinging sound of the bullets, showed that their infantry were at work. Fortunately the Russian aim was high, and the brigade took ground to the right to still further disconcert it. But the advance could no longer be delayed, for by this time Colonel Mortimer must be hard pressed in his difficult position.

As the brigade moved forward, the Russian artillerymen again saw them, and now the enemy's fire became more fatal, for men and horses began to drop out of the ranks. The cavalry advanced in echelon from the left, preceded by the 2nd Bengal Lancers, and, under cover of these, the 4th Dragoon Guards and the 5th Lancers formed to deliver their charge with the 7th Bengal Cavalry in support.

Colonel J. J. S. Chisholme, of the 5th Lancers, the brigade major, passed the thrilling words along the line:



It assumed the character of a hand-to-hand struggle.

"The cavalry are to charge these guns."

As this order was repeated from squadron to squadron, these gallant soldiers straightened their stalwart figures in the saddle, and set their teeth hard as they looked at the seething cauldron of fire and smoke into which they were shortly to plunge. Even the very horses felt that some desperate deed was imminent, for they pawed impatiently and clanked their accoutrements in the wild desire to be moving. Fatigue, hunger, and thirst vanished to the winds.

If there came to that band memories of home and friends, they were banished by the proud consciousness that the honour of England was intrusted to their keeping at that supreme moment. Each man knew that the lives of his struggling countrymen in the main body depended upon his success, and he thought with rage of the dear comrade who, five minutes ago, was riding carelessly by his side, but who now lay rolling in the agonies of death upon Russian soil.

Captain Adams, of the 5th Lancers, was adjusting the chin-strap of his helmet when a voice behind him said:

"It's a warm shop here, sir!"

Turning in the saddle, he saw his soldier servant—a sturdy Yorkshireman named Bolland, who hailed from his own parish—grinning at him from the front rank of the troop.

"You here, Bolland?" said the Captain sternly, for his faithful comrade was supposed to be sick in hospital from a slight attack of fever. "You had no business to be on parade to-night."

"No business, sir! Do you think I would stop behind when the regiment was going into action? Lor' bless you, sir, no fear!"

This reply was unanswerable, and now everyone felt that the period of waiting had passed, for Colonel Doyne rode rapidly to the front of the brigade.

The shot and shell were falling fast on all sides. It was a curiously helpless sensation to be so hotly fired at in the dark.

Two officers in the 2nd Bengal Lancers instinctively reined their horses close together whilst they exchanged a friendly hand pressure.

"Hope to meet you at the mess to-night," said one.

"Same to you, old chap, and a Happy New Year when it comes," was the cool response.

Then Colonel Doyne's voice rang out clearly through the gloom:

"Now we have them! Trot—gallop—charge!"

The last word electrified every pulse like a galvanic shock.

Away dashed the host of men and horses, right into the teeth of the leaden hailstorm, amidst dust, and smoke, and spurts of bright fire. Their path lay straight ahead, and they followed a guide in the Brigadier who would only falter when laid low by the enemy.

A brief but maddening rush through the whizzing bullets and terrific sand-clouds raised by the galloping hoofs, and they were among the Russians. Like a living steam-hammer they pounded down upon the molten group of guns and men, rendered fiery by the flame of the last terrible volley which sought to check the impact of the British troops.

But the effort was in vain. The long bright sabres flashed in the air as they dealt death to the struggling artillerymen, and the powerful horses crushed irresistibly through the wavering infantry which lay beyond the guns.



"Hope to meet you at the mess to-night."

Doyle's horse was shot under him, but mounting another that was riderless, he still led the van as they swept the enemy off the field, for the Russians forthwith abandoned guns and position.

Captain Adams had cut down two of a group of stubborn gunners who seemed to prefer death to an ignominious flight, when he suddenly saw Bolland hard pressed by a trio of Cossacks, one of whom was an officer. He spurred hard to get alongside the youngster in time, but he was too late, for the Cossack officer wheeled his horse to the rear and stabbed the brave Yorkshireman in the back.

With a frenzied yell Captain Adams galloped up and gave the cowardly Russian such a hearty blow that he nearly severed the man's head from his body. The others made off at top speed.

Bolland had fallen from his horse, and Adams, hastily dismounting, bent over his prostrate figure.

"My poor boy, are you much hurt?" he asked, with keen anxiety in his voice, for Bolland was born on his own estate, and could not be gainsaid from following the squire's son into the Lancers.

"Yes sir. It's all over with me, I'm afraid," was the feeble response. "That beggar's sword passed through my back and came out of my right breast."

"You must not despair, Bolland," said the officer, though the words almost choked him. "The ambulance will soon be here, and with care you'll get set up again."

"There's no chance of that, Captain. I'm done for. But I saw you drop him, an' it served him right. Oh, I'm dyin'!"

For a moment it seemed as though he had breathed his last, but Adams found that his heart was still beating, and he remembered that he had a small flask of brandy in his sabre-tache.

He poured some of the liquor into Bolland's mouth, and its influence revived him for a moment, but it was too evident that he was sinking fast.

In a short space he began to talk again, and his words reverted to the familiar tongue used in his Yorkshire home, such as he knew long before he was drilled and smartened into being a spruce cavalryman.

"Captain," he said, "ye'll leuk after t' puir awd mother, A knoa, for she's noabody left to care for her now!"

"Heaven knows I will, if I am spared," was Adams's earnest answer.

"Ye'll be spared right eneuf, sir," said Bolland weakly. "Tak' ma word for t'."

Adams could not answer him, for the tears were in his eyes, but the dying Lancer went on:

"And, Captain."

"Yes," answered Adams.

"Tell 'em, when you reach t' awd country, that A died like a true Yorkshireman, one of t' right sort, and that afore A dropped A'd fixed four of 'em."

"Yes, yes, my lad; you will not be forgotten."

"Thank you, Captain. Remember—poor—awd—mother, and may God—bless her—and you—and all t' foaks at hoam. Oh! Captain, it's over. Goodbye. If A could see t' little p'lace—once more—it 'ud be easier."

As he uttered the last words the young Lancer raised his head and shoulders with a spasmodic effort, and then fell back upon the sand. His features relaxed from their drawn fixity. A smile came over them. He had added one

more name to the glorious death-roll of England's brave soldiers.

When Adams regained his troop the battle was at an end, and the remainder of the disembarkation was effected, quietly and uninterruptedly.

Whereupon "Admiral" Rodney steamed off again to Uzun Ada, towing his rafts in order to bring across the rest of the Indian Army in two sections.

This duty he accomplished in five days, and he then left his warrant officers to carry on the work of forwarding stores to the base at Petrovsk, whilst he made haste to reach headquarters, which by this time were located at Vladikavkaz. Rostoff, on the Moscow line, was already in British hands. With the army of the Caucasus safely locked up behind the impenetrable barrier of snow-clad mountains, it was but a matter of a few days for the railway to be repaired where it had been destroyed by the Russians, and for Sir George White to meet Lord Methuen.

England had now nearly 400,000 men in European Russia.

(To be continued.)

SHE: "You say you would do anything for me, Charlie."

He (fervently): "I would, darling."

She: "Well, you know how frightfully red my hair is, I want you to dye yours red, just to keep me in countenance!"

MAY: "You wouldn't think from her looks that she is one of the newly rich and has forced her way into society."

Old Boy: "No; but you might be sure of it from the looks of every other woman in the room."

LITTLE GIRL: "I'm afraid to go to sleep in the dark."

Mamma: "Nonsense, dear; remember that little angels are with you."

Little Girl (ten minutes later): "I can't go to sleep, mamma. One of the angels is biting me."

"I DON'T think this ham is perfectly cured, my dear," said Mr. Newlywed.

"Well, what shall I do, Tom?" asked the sweet young wife anxiously. "Send it back to the shop or telegraph for the doctor?"

MISS CLARA: "You say, Ethel, that you only paid sixpence for having your gloves cleaned? Why, only the other day I was actually asked ninepence!"

Miss Ethel (with a slight but not dangerous cough): "Indeed, dear, but I suppose the size is considered!"

MOTHER: "Johnny, you ought to be ashamed of yourself. Here you sit in bed yet, while the sun has been up for hours."

Johnny: "Yes, but the sun is warm, while I am always cold when I get up. There are different kinds of sons, and you've got them mixed up."

A YOUNG rascal on one side of the road pinned something to the coat-tails of a passer-by, and as the man went across the street, several persons saw it and smiled. A second boy ran up to the man and said:

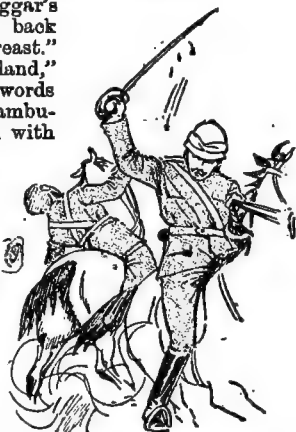
"Mister, there's a card pinned to your coat. Let me take it off."

"How did that get there?" said the man.

"One o' them ragamuffins put it on, I s'pose."

"The young wretches! Well, here's a penny for you."

Two minutes later, the good little boy pinned it on to another man, and his partner on the other side collected another penny.



Captain Adams gave the Russian a hearty blow.

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proportions. **LILLIE POWDER** is prepared under
my strict personal supervision; and I hereby guarantee
that each box is dispensed according to the 'original recipe.'
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The Timminses Troubles.



I.—The Timminses in Hamlet.

"Now, my dear," said Mr. Timmins, opening the book and assuming the correct dramatic scowl. "Now, my dear, we'll rehearse our part for Specwick's theatricals. I'm to be Hamlet, and you're to be the Queen, and we want this thing to go off all right. The hardest part we have to play together is where I accuse you of poisoning my father, and we had better try that until we get it perfect. I'll commence:

"Now, mother, what's the matter?"

"Well, I was thinking whether I had better wear my black silk or my maroon dress," returned Mrs. Timmins, sticking her fingers in her mouth reflectively. "Do queens wear—"

"Will you be kind enough to tell me what pack of cards you got that idea of a queen from?" demanded Mr. Timmins, fixing his wife's eye with a glare. "Do you suppose that the Queen sent for Hamlet to get his opinions about bargains in millinery? When I say that, you must say: 'Hamlet, thou hast thy father much offended!'"

"Oh, I understand," pleaded Mrs. Timmins. "I thought you asked me what I was thinking about. I didn't know you had commenced the play."

"Well, you be careful this time," recommended Mr. Timmins, in a tone of solemn warning. "This is a play, this is. Do you think you know the difference between a play and a bankrupt sale?" he repeated:

"Now, mother, what's the matter?"

"There's nothing the matter now," replied Mrs. Timmins, straightening up and preparing to be Queen as soon as her turn came. "Go on, dear, I understand it now."

"Say it, can't you?" thundered Mr. Timmins. "Don't you know your part?"

"What shall I say, dear?" asked Mrs. Timmins, looking at her husband with a dazed expression.

"Say!" roared Mr. Timmins. "Sing a comic song. Didn't I tell you what to say? Look here," and Mr. Timmins lowered his voice to the intense pitch, "have you ever read this play?"

"Why, yes!" faltered Mrs. Timmins. "You come in and stab Mr. Specwick behind the ears, and I scream."

"Hear her!" moaned Mr. Timmins, frothing at the mouth. "Stab Specwick behind the ears! That's all right. Now you scream. Scream. Why don't you? You know so much about your part, why don't you play it?"

"W-e-e-e-e!" squealed Mrs. Timmins, faithfully fol-

lowing instructions. "I knew I could do it right, as soon as you showed me how. Will that do?"

"Oh, that was queenly!" snarled Mr.

Timmins, dropping into a chair, and regarding his wife with rolling eyes. "Just do that again! Four of those dramatic efforts will make this play the greatest of modern entertainments! Do it once more!"

"It hurts my throat," complained Mrs. Timmins. "Can't we make it do with one scream, dear?"

"Mrs. Timmins," said her husband, with unnatural calmness, "there's been some mistake made in this thing. You should have been cast for Ophelia."

"What does he do?" inquired Mrs. Timmins.

"She was an idiot from birth, and afterwards went crazy," explained Mr. Timmins. "That was the part for you."

"Then I'd rather be Queen," returned Mrs. Timmins, bridling a little. "Now, dear, let's begin all over again, and I'll do it right this time."

"You can't do it worse," growled Mr. Timmins. "I'll try it once more, just to see what kind of foolishness you are capable of."

"Now, mother, what's the matter?"

"We-e-e-e!" squeaked Mrs. Timmins, satisfied that she was perfect this time. "'Hamlet! oh, Hamlet!' we-e-e-e!"

"Turn it off!" yelled Mr. Timmins, springing from his chair, and capering round the room as though a mad dog had bitten him. "What's the matter?"

"We-e-e-e!" squealed Mrs. Timmins, profoundly impressed with the idea that the play was still going on, and that she had at last mastered its intricacies.

"Will you ever shut up?" gasped Mr. Timmins, wilder than ever to think his wrath was mistaken for acting. "Have you got some kind of a notion that the Queen's a foghorn?"

"I did just as you told me, dear," argued Mrs. Timmins, completely taken aback by her husband's criticism. "You said I was to scream when you asked me what the matter was. Didn't I do it right?"

"Oh, that was right!" shrieked Mr. Timmins. "You struck the keynote of high art both times! I'm going to fit you out with a hair trunk and a pair of hoofs, and start you for a menagerie! Such talent as that can't be wanted on any cheap Shakespeare plays while I've got the money and influence to get you a job in the legitimate circus," and Mr. Timmins kicked the book through the window, and buried himself in his evening paper.

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ON THE BEST AUTHORITY.

Hiss.—Some of the native races of Africa—the Basutos, for instance—express their approval of an orator or a spectacle by hissing.

P.—Soap has been in use for quite 3,000 years, and is twice mentioned in the Bible. A soap-boiler's shop was found in the ruins of Pompeii. Yet there are people even in this country who scarcely know what it is.

R. E.—One of the most primitive railways in operation at the present time, is that between Atami and Ogawara, in Japan. The cars, or carriages, hold four people, two on a seat, and sitting back to back, and the train is made up of two, sometimes three, carriages. The motive power is furnished by human beings, the train being pulled along by coolies.

R. E.—Gaust, in the Pyrenees, is a small republic. Its area is just about one square mile, and it has 150 inhabitants.

J. B.—The smallest pony in the world is owned by the Marquis Cercano, an Italian horse-breeder. Its height is twenty-eight inches, and it is often harnessed to a small carriage for two persons.

I. L.—Forty-four muscles are called into play for the production of the human voice. In the case of the small boy interviewing his father, two lots of muscles are usually working, connected by a strap.

Mus.—The present system of musical notation was invented in the eleventh century.

S. N.—A cubic foot of newly-fallen snow weighs five and a-half pounds, and its bulk is twelve times that of an equal weight of water.

P. N.—The population of London equals the combined populations of Berlin, Paris, St. Petersburg, and Rome.

T. H. L.—The record for wear on the part of a carpet appears to be held by one in the hall of the Shah's Palace. It is stated on good authority that it has been in use for nearly two hundred years. It is quite certain that no dirty boots are ever wiped on that.

IBERIA.—Spain should be a very rich country, for her mineral wealth surpasses that of any other country in Europe. She possesses rich stores of copper, zinc, iron, silver, quicksilver, and antimony. But the Spaniards do very little in that direction, and where the work is carried on, the best posts—if not the whole concern—are in the hands of foreigners.

COLON.—Although the French have made a terrible hash of things as colonists, they go on steadily acquiring territory. During the past twenty years they have annexed 2,000,000 square miles of territory in Africa. They now have Algeria, Tunis, the Western Soudan, a large part of the Somali coast, Dahomey, the French Congo, Senegal, "the light soil" of the Sahara, and are making progress in Abyssinia.

C. C.—The coffee tree produces fruit to the age of seventy-five years.

HAL is of a statistical turn of mind. "If all the Queen's subjects were to file past a certain point, singly, how long would it take?"—Passing uninterruptedly day and night, it would take seventy years, for there are more than 450,000,000 people in the British Empire.

CARPENTER.—Nails can be driven into the hardest wood in ordinary use, if they are first dipped in lard.

COOLIE.—India has more species of plants than any other country; the number is given as nearly 15,000, whereas the flora of the whole European Continent contains fewer than 11,000.

FIRE.—The London Fire Brigade receives more calls on Saturday than on any other day in the week.

S. J.—Among the lower classes of the Siberian population there is a law or custom which gives to a husband the right to get rid of his wife by simply tearing off her veil or other head covering. This is taken advantage of by the husband on the slightest disagreement.

Y.—The tobacco seed is so minute that any ordinary thimble will hold enough to sow an acre of ground.

V. C.—A good Arabian horse can go for twenty-four hours in summer without drinking, and for a longer time in winter, despite the fatigue of carrying a rider across the arid plains.

"Why are certain birds and animals called 'game'?" asks B. P. H.—This is a case of transferred meaning. The old Saxon word, from which our modern term is derived, meant, not the animal pursued, but the sport of pursuing. Certain birds and animals were gradually selected as the noblest quarry of knightly sport, and, in order to keep themselves, the lords of the soil placed them in a class by themselves, and protected them from all attacks, save their own, by means of laws and penalties more or less ferocious. These were the origin of our game laws, the term "game" being used to

distinguish between the protected and unprotected birds and animals. Game, therefore, now means any bird or animal which may not be shot or hunted while alive or dealt in when dead, without a special license from the Revenue authorities.

R. G.—I should say the sprat is about the most difficult fish to capture alive. When caught in the ordinary way the fish dies as soon as it comes in contact with the meshes of the net.

G. P. asks: "When did people first begin to take an annual holiday by the sea?"—Of comparatively recent years. About the year 1750 a certain doctor noticed that the fisherfolk of a little hamlet—now our modern Brighton—when suffering from scrofula and other skin diseases, made a practice of washing their bodies in sea-water and binding up the affected parts with sea-weed. He began to prescribe this treatment to his patients. The new cure "caught on," and soon developed from a sanitary practice to a pastime, and it became the fashion to go to the seaside for a portion of the summer months. The people of the Middle Ages regarded the sea with horror, so much so, indeed, that a compulsory plunge into the sea was once a legal form of punishment in this country.

L. L. D. C.—A flirt, broadly speaking, is any woman who is attractive enough to be opposed to marrying, without being thereby any less likely to marry.

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